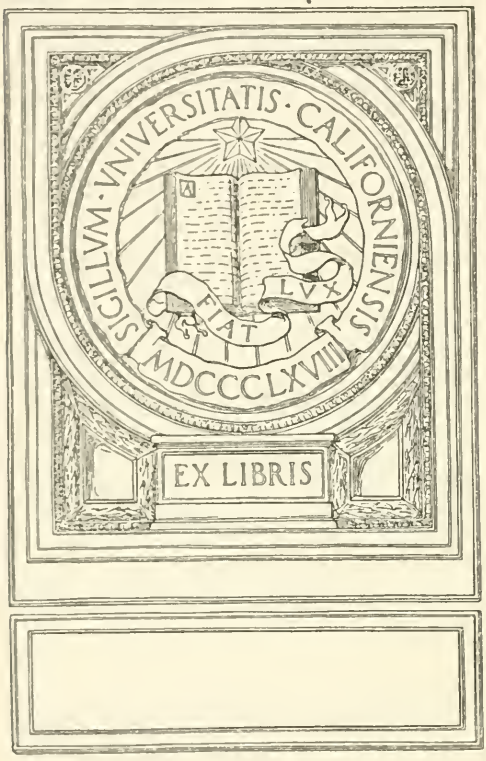
# MOUNTAIN MEMORIES

SIR MARTIN CONWAY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



# MOUNTAIN MEMORIES

*Photo: Spencer.*

THE SCHRECKHORN.

# Mountain Memories

## A Pilgrimage of Romance

By

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# Preface

IN taking leave of this book I desire to return my thanks to the kind friends whose help has been very valuable to me: to Mr. Sydney Spencer, for the beautiful photographs of Alpine scenery he has placed at my disposal, and for many useful hints; also to Professor E. J. Garwood, my old travelling companion, for Spitsbergen photographs. The verses cited on pages 96 and 158 are from the poems of the late Mr. Frederick Myers.

MARTIN CONWAY.

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# Mountain Memories

## A Pilgrimage of Romance

### CHAPTER I

#### THE OPENED DOOR

I WONDER whether this beginning is to end in a book or, like so many others, in the waste-paper basket? No long-thought-out plan, but a sudden impulse immediately yielded to, has prompted the writing, for the bright sunshine of to-day seems not so much to be revealing the landscape as illuminating memory. The landscapes of the past appear at this moment more real than the immediately visible world. Mountains, lakes, the desert, the broad sea, sights beheld here, there and everywhere, are passing before the vision of the mind, blotting out the present as sunshine outfloods the stars. Death, I love to think, may thus give back to us the vanished years. The journey of life has led through strange lands. We have passed them by—our boyhood, our youth, our middle age—each a series of great adventures, great explorations of untravelled regions. We have left them behind and are still looking forward when Death comes with its summons to "Change here." We must alight from the moving train. The journey is ended, but not the

region we have journeyed through. That still exists, and—who knows?—alighted from the train of life, we may be able to wander back and survey it all at our leisure—" the eternal landscape of the past, a life-long stretch of time revealed." Then perhaps we may again have vision of friends, places and events which memory alone can vaguely essay to touch while we are alive.

Memory differs from experience herein that she flits hither and thither, like one of those great tropical butterflies of Brazil, flashing into iridescent blue on the beat of the opened wing in sunshine and utterly vanishing from sight as the wings fold upward and the duller sides lose themselves against shadow. Tantalising bursts of fiery blue are all we behold, first here, then there. So it is with memory. It leaps from place to place, encircling the world faster than light—one moment in African deserts, the next among Asia's great mountains, the next in the Sargasso Sea. Memory annihilates both space and time, as Death may annihilate them when " Time shall be no more."

I often wonder what Christians mean when they talk of a future life. If " Time shall be no more," there can be neither future nor past. Eternal life I can vaguely comprehend, but future life—what is that? Are we everlastingly to be imprisoned in these bonds of time and space? Are we never to be free? Thought is free in space as in time. It can annihilate them both. Space and time are attributes of the senses, not of the soul. They belong to the material world, not to the spiritual. If man is a mere material machine, he

belongs to the world of time and space and can never escape. Death must extinguish him. If, however, man is essentially spiritual and his body a temporary tool, the essence of him does not belong to the world of time and space but to an eternal world in which neither time nor space constrain him. The soul of man is in Eternity already, and awaits not Death to transport him to that high region.

It must be within the experience of everyone that the effect of landscape upon us depends on our mood. Some aspects of Nature seem to have the power of creating the mood in which they can be enjoyed, but that is a delusion. It is not the aspect but its associations that create the mood. Poets, painters, inspired writers have taught us the secret of vision. Our joy in sunsets owes something to Turner. Mountains thrill us because Wordsworth and Ruskin opened our eyes. Two or three centuries ago they spoke no such message as we now read in them. Venice about the year 1500 must have been at the very culmination of her unrivalled beauty, yet Dürer, who spent a year there, and whose letters home we possess, never refers to the loveliness of Venice. About to return to Nuremberg, he does not regret leaving so much beauty behind, but only reflects, "How I shall freeze after this sunshine!" It is not Nature that illuminates the mind, but the mind that glorifies Nature. The beauty that we behold must first arise in ourselves. It is born for the most part in suffering. "We learn in suffering what we teach in song." That is the experience of all poets, and every man is a poet at the moment when he

visualises beauty. If we were perfect in creative imagination we might see perfect beauty everywhere. As it is, most of us can only find it in the presence of certain phenomena to which we have learnt to respond.

A lad first awakes to beauty perhaps at vision of great snow-mountains. The moment of the opening of the doors thus comes for him. He "sees Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending." The dyed glories of the East at the hour of dawn may admit another for the first time to the Kingdom of Romance. For him then "the morning stars sing together and all the sons of God are shouting for joy." It matters not how the birth of each into the eternal world comes to pass. Those who are chosen for the kingdom enter by one of countless gates, and thenceforward are free of a larger or smaller province of it. They have "seen God." Their desire becomes to know more and more of the kingdom, to possess it in larger measure. They may live outwardly the most commonplace lives, going to offices by humdrum morning trains and fulfilling the ordinary duties of the earners of daily bread or the mothers of families, but that is not their real life. Behind the material veil they are Pilgrims of Romance. They are initiated members of a secret brotherhood. They recognise one another, but pass unrecognised by the world for what they really are.

It is this Pilgrimage of Romance that has been life itself to me, and a strange route it has caused me to follow. A wiser man would have guided his course better. I have never sought to be wise, but always to

plunge into the unknown, to get away from the dull round of every day, and go forth as student or adventurer into subjects or regions where it seemed to me at the moment that the unattained might be attainable, the unexperienced might be felt. These momentary ideals often proved to be "wandering fires," yet another always supplanted the last.

The realms of art and Nature make the most obvious call. All the art of the past, all the regions of the earth. Egypt, with its deep mystery—dark-shadowed Edfu, most dignified of all temples, the great diorite statues, the tortuous labyrinths of the imagined underworld. Greece, with its monumental purity, its visions of perfected humanity. The decorative splendours and superhuman magnificences of Byzantium. The art of the Moslem peoples, startling in sudden incidence of a completed impression. Gothic architecture insidiously and slowly cumulative in capture of the imagination, soaring, involved, lurking with unexpected, half-hidden charms. The works of these and a hundred schools, from the Aurignacian cave-dwellers and Magdalenian bone-carvers down to the product of our own days, each makes its separate call and lures us on from age to age, from style to style, from material to material. Each seems to offer a new revelation; and thus I at least have never come to rest as exclusive worshipper at the shrine of any.

So, too, it was with Nature. She has called to me from ice-bound Arctic solitudes and the yet more solitary tropical deserts. Radiant Kashmir and Chile, flamboyant Jamaica and Brazil, gardened England,

ineffable Venice, Italy enriched with every variety of charm, the stupendous mountains of Asia, the gracefuller Alps of Europe, the Andes soaring aloft from Amazonian forests and drooping to the high desert plain, lakes rock-framed or set in luxury of vegetation, rivers in cataract and thunderous fall, or slowly meandering through limitless plains, the storm-beaten reaches and black-forested channels of Tierra del Fuego, these and countless other kinds of scenery have called me, and each for the moment has appeared supreme. Lo! here is the land of romance, I have said. But it was not so. The mood of revelation passed. Nature put on once more her scientific, mechanical shroud, and I wandered on to search elsewhere for "that untravell'd world whose margin fades for ever and for ever as we move."

Nor does one need to travel physically in search of romance. Each new friend may open the door. Love holds the most comprehensive master-key. "God's own smile comes out" once at least in almost every lifetime on the face of the beloved. All acknowledge the days of love as a time of romance. Most think of romance as though only then to be experienced. To the happy few their love-vision lasts on unbroken. For most it is a passing vision, from time to time perhaps renewed and again destroyed. But love is not the only giver of this joy. It can be found, is found, by those whom the gods love, in all careers and every society. There is romance in banking and on the Stock Exchange, romance in the mysterious, almost musical fluxes and interlacements of money power beneath the

surface of commerce, romance in industry and the management of men, romance in armies and navies and trades unions, romance in transport and flight. All these romances intercross and interlace in the high romance of politics. It is not, as a rule, ambition that takes men into that arena and keeps them there; they are attracted by the romance of public life. The greatest politicians have always been romantics, none more so in the nineteenth century than Disraeli, none than Lloyd George in the twentieth.

Let no one, therefore, suppose that in this book I write the whole autobiography of a life of romance. The secrets of that tale no man would willingly tell. I write here only such small parts of the story as are concerned with mountains, though fearing that the power so to tell even that minor chapter as to convey to others a hundredth part of what the hills have been to me may not be mine.

## CHAPTER II

### GERMINATION

IGNORANCE and imagination combined are fruitful parents of romance. Knowledge blasts fancy. The sun, moon and starry heaven were gods and the abode of gods in the childhood of the world. We have weighed, measured and mapped them, plumbed their distances and analysed their substance. Sun and stars are gods no longer, but insensate fires raging in the vast depths of uninhabited space. Nothing remains to them but their enormous size, and even that ceases to impress the imagination when its mere relativity is grasped. As knowledge spreads out its tentacles it captures the realms of romance one by one and brings them within the dull domain of science and the intellect. Mankind hails scientific discovery as an unmixed blessing. Has it not rather been a curse? The last century was the great age of scientific discovery. It beheld the masses of mankind increasingly materialised, growingly discontented, uglier in their surroundings, ever more futile in their amusements, less joyous, less imaginative, less faithful, less ideal.

As it has been with the race, so is it with the individual. Childhood is the time of happiness and of romance. The illumination of a mother with her baby is no greater than that of a little girl with her doll; but how much else the little girl possesses that the mother

has lost! Wordsworth imagined the infant newly come into the world as "trailing clouds of glory." Is it not rather a glorious ignorance that possesses children, coupled with a power of imagination almost unbounded?

Everyone knows how hard it is to travel back in memory to childhood's days and feel as we then felt. The gulf between children and grown-ups is for most unbridgeable. That is why grown-ups look so foolish in the eyes of children. The child leaps in imagination over every obstacle and wonders at the halting gait of grown-ups. It is not the wisdom but the limitations of the mature that appal the young. The world children actually know is so small; the other world beyond it, which belongs to their fancy, is so near and so easy to reach that they wonder at the incapacity of grown-ups to enter with them into that so familiar domain.

I remember with tolerable clearness an event of my own childhood, one of many such, which established the gulf between me and my elders as an untraversable void and made me give them up as hopeless. I was five years old. My governess had been in Australia, and used to tell me stories about kangaroos, gold mines, the bush, and such like matters of real interest. I brooded in silence over them and decided to go to Australia at once. She and I would go together. Obviously the first thing to do was to pack. I crept into the night nursery one afternoon when no one was about. Unfortunately a trunk was not discoverable, but what child would be put out by a little thing like that? I merely drew forth two or three drawers from the chest, packed my belongings in them,

and hid them under the bed. It was a rapturous moment. I was already on the way. Australia for me was the other world, the land of romance. I was on wings. To no one did I breathe a word about the adventure. An hour or two may have passed before all the house was full of hullabaloo. My things were missed. Where had they gone? Servants hunted high and low, but could discover nothing. Drawers and their contents had vanished. No one thought of asking me, and I could not have brought myself to volunteer an explanation. The destined bathos was too certain and horrible. I also hid. Finally I was interrogated and confessed. I was off to Australia, and had packed accordingly. The patronising laughter of my elders goes in a cold shudder down my back again at this moment of writing. What had been so real and so wonderful to me was the inept folly of a child to them. They could not understand. I could not explain. Between me and them there was a great gulf fixed. I have been told that in Japan civilisation is so much more developed that the gulf is narrower, and children are seldom in this way wounded in the house of their parents.

Thus early, by the accident of that Australian governess, my fancy stretched forth to distant lands. People might impress upon me, as they only too often did, that this world was a transitory affair, a mere antechamber to a world to come. That vision left me cold, except when I alternately flamed and shivered with horror in the darkness of the night at the pictured tortures which I did not doubt awaited my inevitably-

to-be-damned soul. Dreamland for me was just "abroad"—"dear abroad," as I heard someone call it. The thoughts of it got tangled up with the sound of the cathedral bells of Rochester ringing for afternoon service in summer, at the hour when I was turned out alone into our garden, to dig or dream as pleased me best. The other day I heard them, and for a moment the old romance returned in formless vagueness; but, alas! there is no other world left for me now on earth or in the material universe wherein to travel fancy-free. Experience has destroyed them all. I know that it would do no good "to sail beyond the sunset" in search of the Happy Isles. Bran could go thither in good hope, because he did not know. Admiralty charts have obliterated that possibility. If I still possess a secret kingdom it is not of the old kind. Were I to reveal it to you, most gentle reader, you would only laugh as did the grown-ups, and the gulf would open between you and me, unbridgeable, and make us strangers for ever more.

Matson's pond was the other fancy place which rooted itself deeply in my affections, and I love it still—not, indeed, as I have seen it in recent years, after absence during half a century, but as it was before suburbs and villadom had stretched out toward it and a tram-line come rasping and grinding by. Still, there the pond is, now a mere brown and weed-covered expanse within an iris of mud. The roots of the twin elms that overshadowed it remain and mark the site of a more wonderful water-cave than I can ever hope hereafter to behold. The trees with mingled roots

grew, two in one, at the edge of the water, and forked away from one another a foot or two up. I could climb into this fork and look over—a wild and forbidden joy only to be snatched by running ahead and getting into place before the attendant dragon could prevent, or when she was fortunately caught on the neighbouring stile or otherwise off the alert. If you stretched over far enough, you could see beneath a tangle of roots a dark and wonderful grotto about two feet high, floored with lapping water and magical reflections. I used to picture myself sailing into it on a three-masted toy ship, with tiny little men on board, myself small as they. There were ledges on which we would land, and darker recesses we would explore, but the great thing was that no one would see us. Once inside we should be away from lessons and rules and proprieties and regular hours and all the limitations of my little world of reality and every day. I had other adventures out on the open pond, of course—voyages in ships, imagined walkings on the water with a boat on each foot, and I know not what beside; but the Cavern of the Roots was the enthralling place where I never was allowed to linger long enough to taste a thousandth of the joys it held in such profusion. "Why are you staying behind? Come along quickly. Take care you don't fall in!" Thus day after day the dream was broken. I never told the secret, for no one would have understood.

The Folkestone seashore in summer defined and to some degree limited these vague aspirations toward the world beyond my ken. There twice a day real steamers

paddled forth and vanished on the far horizon, carrying people of flesh and blood away to the land of mystery and the beyond. I saw them vanish, saw others returning. How wonderfully they must feel! Each was transfigured for me. Words fail to describe the passion of longing with which I desired to be of that company. Day after day I watched the drama of the start—people emptying from the train, embarking, the downward flight of baggage, the gradual settlement, gangways withdrawn, the clang of a bell and blasts of a steam horn, then round went the paddles and the fairy boat moved slowly off, past the pier head and away. What could it feel like to be actually going? My poor little imagination boggled in the attempt to leap to that supreme height, and fell back breathless on itself, yearning painfully, unboundedly, toward the beyond. Then one day the children of a family with whom we used to dig the sands were taken to Boulogne and back for an hour or two on that distant shore just discernible from ours in clear weather. They returned like Moses from the Mount, glorified; but, alas! they had nothing to tell. Not otherwise did Martha and Mary regard Lazarus than I them, and doubtless with as little reward. No traveller could assuage my thirst with tales. The least articulate could not disappoint, the most descriptive could scarcely stimulate. It was not knowledge I sought, but sight—to be there, to be part of that wonderful world beyond, to become myself an inhabitant of the land of romance. Another ten years were to pass before that dream began to be dispelled by experience of the actual unromantic fact.

About this time we spent a summer at Malvern, and I toddled rather than scrambled up my first hill, the Worcestershire Beacon. To go inland instead of to the seashore had seemed a poor sort of expedition till I had climbed this hill, and then I had no further use for the sea. I still possess the letter written to my grandfather describing this ascent. It was laboriously indited in capital letters, one within each square of a sheet of paper previously ruled in pencil to that end. We climbed, I said, "right to the very top," thus instinctively expressing the born climber's feeling that unless the actual summit is gained the ascent is not complete. Two things only do I now remember of this climb—the view from the summit and the rapture of sliding down some slippery grass slopes. The view was the great revelation. I had never beheld so much of the world at once. Names were nothing to me, nor counties and far-away towns and tiny dots of cathedrals; I remember little of all that, but can recall as though it were yesterday the great flat, extending world that spread away and away on this side and on that and called to be wandered over and possessed by wandering. Wide outreaching vistas, thank Heaven, still retain for me the same mysterious charm that belonged to that one. The delusion that somewhere, far off in the blue distance, lurks the Perfect Place, that the blue hills really are blue, that what one beholds is in its essence actually as beautiful as from above it seems—so long as that delusion lasts, Romance lingers. It is not finally banished till the cynic's lesson is completely learned: "There where thou art not, there is

happiness." The Lord preserve me from the abyss of that attainment!

The other day, passing through Tunbridge Wells, I went to see the Toad Rock. It is now surrounded by iron railings and hopelessly philistinised. Fifty years ago it was the merry centre of a glorious playground for children. There were little rock-cliffs near by, with tiny caves in them into which small people could crawl. Generally one had to dig out the sand to make room. That accomplished, the gnomes entered also, and we settled down hilariously together. What went forward was no mere make-believe, but the real thing. We knew that we were troglodytes, though that was not what we called ourselves. By piling sand at the entrance we could close the door and be safe against the attack of the wildest of wild beasts. My feeling of sympathy for and understanding of palæolithic man is, in fact, derived from memories of the little cave by the Toad Rock. Let no one imagine that the curious sandstone lump, which did resemble a giant toad, went for nothing in the sentiment of the place. He was our great fetish. If he was not alive, he was at any rate frightfully uncanny, and we scrambled around his pedestal with feelings different from those associated with any other rock. One day I made the epoch-marking discovery that with a stretch and a kick it was possible to scramble up his back and so climb on to the top of him. It was my first experience of the joy of rock-climbing—the concrete pleasure of solving a gymnastic problem. I have never been a great rock-climber, but from that day the cragsman's delight has

been comprehensible. One or two rivals appeared, and our frequent ascents soon wore convenient footholds in the soft rock, whereupon the climb became popular. The same development on a bigger scale happened with the Matterhorn, and that scramble also lost its glory. Probably the iron railings are the result of our remote initiative.

I believe it was in the next year, when I was seven years old, that we spent the summer in North Wales. From the top of Penmaenmawr I remember to have seen the *Great Eastern* far off over the sea on her way from Liverpool to New York, but the only mountain that impressed me was Snowdon, and that impression is still to this day felt. It was in course of a family driving-tour. We had slept at Llanberis. I can recall the collection of horses and donkeys at the inn door in the morning, and something of the confusion of the start. I went off proudly on my two legs holding my father's hand. The ascent was a mere uphill walk along a mule-road, and I remember nothing about it till, to my inexpressible delight, we came into clouds. The fact that a cloud is neither more nor less than a fog did not then occur to me. I was carried away by the name of the thing. Clouds, great white clouds sailing across the blue sky, especially those big bulging ones that puff themselves aloft on summer afternoons, had always delighted me since I can remember. They obviously belonged to the other world. I used to imagine myself lying on them and floating about. Now I was actually in the middle of a cloud. It ought to have disillusioned me, but it did not. Somebody

then said that I was tired, and to my indignation I was hoisted astride a horse ridden by my aunt, and thus ignominiously arrived on the summit, clinging with arms round her waist and causing loud laughter in onlookers.

The fog was thicker than ever on the peak. Even the great stone-man could only be seen a few yards off. It was too high for me to add a stone, but my cousins' butler took one from me and set it on the top. The only memorable joy of the descent was running into a bog and getting fairly stuck. Our carriages awaited us on the road somewhere down the other side, but I remember no more, except being awakened from time to time in a deluge of rain. The inn we were to stop at was reached in darkness, and proved to be full. We had to drive on. Where we ultimately took shelter I know not, nor do I remember anything more of this trip, except isolated incidents which do not hang together. The fact that I had been up Snowdon, the highest mountain in England and Wales, and that I had been in the clouds, overwhelmed all other memories and induced a sense of childish importance which I trust no one ever discovered. Later climbs of bigger mountains shrink into insignificance compared with this immeasurable triumph.

Snowdon possesses a singular power of attracting mountain-lovers. The late Charles Edward Mathews, than whom none ever loved mountains more, used to climb it every year. Its steeper sides have been scrambled over, up every conceivable line of ascent in summer and winter, and have taken their toll of active

lives. From certain points of view it has a great and kingly air, so that when laden with winter snow, its ridges overhung with cornices, it has been known to deceive experienced Swiss guides into a greatly exaggerated estimate of its size. Its effect upon me was due to none of these recondite charms, but merely to its repute. That overwhelmed me, just as the ignorant are overwhelmed by the mere name of Shakespeare. In the upshot this adventure set me on the road I was destined to follow and, combined with the other incidents above related, made certain (suitable chances and facilities occurring) that in after life I should become a mountain climber and a traveller in remote and unexplored regions. The child of seven had received the directing impulses. It only remained for opportunity to give them play.

## CHAPTER III

### ALPS ON ALPS ARISE

REFERENCE was made in the previous chapter to a family of children with whom we used to dig the Folkestone sands. One of them afterward became a distinguished member of the Alpine Club, and will be recalled by visitors to the Belalp, which he constantly frequented, as the Rev. Arthur Fairbanks. Mountain air was recommended as curative for some constitutional weakness from which he suffered in youth, and thus it was that while I was at school he was climbing high mountains in Switzerland. His feats excited in me boundless admiration and a vague longing. At last, at long last, my turn came. The staggering news reached me at school that I was to join my family in Switzerland for the summer holidays. I went out to the cricket field and lay on my back in the sunshine, gazing at some great white clouds and wondering whether snow-mountains could be as splendid. More splendid, I conceived, and rightly, they could not be.

Stogdon of Harrow was going out to join Fairbanks and do guideless climbing with him—the Jungfrau, the Aletschhorn—great feats in 1872, though little thought of nowadays. I was to travel to Berne with him, and we were joined by Walter Leaf and Fred. Pollock, likewise equipped for mountaineering. The paraphernalia of axes and ropes, the talk about climbs accom-

plished or foreshadowed, stimulated my already flaming imagination. Novel surroundings, foreign languages spoken, all the un-English sights on every side, made that journey a dreamlike experience, reducing me to such utter silence that my companions scarcely knew I was there, and with utmost goodwill can now barely remember the fact.

The start from Dover by the Ostend boat was a blank disappointment. It possessed none of the romance I had expected. My heart did not leap to my throat as the paddles went round; in fact, nothing particular seemed to be happening, only a number of incidents individually insignificant, collectively unimpressive. There was plenty to watch, but, as far as I was concerned, little to feel. We were away out at sea without the throb of a pulse. In time we were even out of sight of land—a condition I had wonderingly foreseen, but again failed emotionally to affront. When you gaze seaward from the shore you are as much out of sight of land in that direction as ever at sea. It is only when you turn round that it is otherwise. This was a new discovery to me. Matters improved as we approached Ostend, for a terrific thunderstorm opened fire, lightning striking down to right and left in startling proximity, and deluges of rain. There was no lack of thrills in the landing.

The journey by train through Brussels, Metz, and Strasbourg to Basle has left singularly slight impression on my memory. Recently mended scars of war excited me a little, but on the whole the novelty of everything confounded reflection. Sleep, the assimilation of

strange forms of food, new sights, swift changes filled the hours. They were accomplishing great revolutions within me, but I could not have told what was happening. The last stage was a five-mile drive from Berne to Zimmerwald, a village in recent years notorious for an International Socialist Congress, but then selected for my father as the quietest of quiet resorts, with fine air and his Berne physician within reach.

Zimmerwald sits on a green shelf overlooking the valley between Berne and Thun. That is the foreground of its view. Farther off comes the Lake of Thun, with the Niesen and Stockhorn hills to the right, and other green foothills stretching round from right to left. Above and beyond them all the whole white row of the Oberland giants reaches into the sky. Little of this was visible during the first day or two, for it rained and rained. Wet fields and woods were our immediate surroundings, and for daily interest the cheese-making operations in the village factory, the first stages of which I was never up early enough to behold. Life, in fact, was the least bit humdrum, full of little novelties, but not exciting. At last came a morning when the sun shone through my window and I looked unexpectantly forth—lo! there were the snow-mountains, radiant, overwhelming, the whole row of them, from Blümlisalp to Finsteraarhorn, glittering in a sun-mantle of new-fallen snow. They were not in the least like clouds, nor like anything I had ever beheld or dreamed of. Had they been built of transparent crystal, they could not have been more brilliant. I felt them as no part of this earth or in any way

belonging to the world of experience. Here at last was the other world, visible, inaccessible, no doubt, but authentically there; actual yet incredible, veritably solid with an aspect of eternal endurance, yet also ethereal; overwhelmingly magnificent but attractive too. No dimmest idea of climbing them entered my mind; I gazed and gazed, and all day long returned to gaze again with a formless, inarticulate, intoxicating emotion that, alas! can never return. They were not individual to me—Jungfrau and Eiger and the rest—I resented being bothered with their names. They were just the walls of heaven. Who beholding those for the first time would ask the nomenclature of the towers? For three weeks this vision recurred at frequent intervals. The wonder of the sunset dyed them. Night blanched and then hid them. Clouds and storm enveloped them. Limpid air displayed their every detail. They were always the same, yet ever changing like the face of the beloved. Each new aspect was a new revelation. Familiarity without approximation bred increasing reverence.

These three weeks were for me a time of intense restlessness. I wanted to wander away toward the great white wall, but was too young and ignorant to be permitted any distant excursion alone. Twice a day I shot out of Zimmerwald in one direction or another, and always had to return unsatisfied. That the mountains were drawing me to them I did not then recognise, save in the case of the Niesen, which seemed to be within reach of my individual enterprise had I been free. My dear father, the saintliest man I have

ever known, whose whole life showed no flaw even under the microscopic gaze of his own family, could not be expected to realise the tumult through which I was passing. Every morning, at slow leisure after a rather late breakfast and even on the finest days, he gathered us into his room for Bible-reading and exposition, lasting often upward of an hour. My impatience under this trial and the effort to hide it were almost unendurable. When at last the books were closed, I flung out into the open, hating Bibles and religion and bursting with desire for Nature, careless of promised heaven or threatened hell, and just longing to get away and wander anywhere out of the constraint of home surroundings.

This reaction was intensified by devotion at that time to astronomy. I had brought with me my beloved three-inch telescope, and spent every fine night star-gazing in accordance with the directions of an excellent little handbook by Proctor. He was my prophet in those days, and I used to write him letters, to which he was good enough sometimes to reply. The normal processes of public-school education were hateful to me. I always loathed games, as I did class-rooms and church services and all the places and occasions when we had to conform to rules. The fact that one was taught languages made me rush hungrily to science, and all that I ever learnt at school was self-taught in play-time. Hence the joy of astronomy. It could only be cultivated by breaking rules. Bed-time come, the lights out, and everything quiet, I used to creep down-stairs again, get out my telescope, and spend hours

finding double-stars, nebulæ and star-clusters, or drawing the momentary aspect of Jupiter's ruddy belts and watching the passage of the shadow of his moons. Saturn had his turn, and one morning just before sunrise I found Mercury and beheld his slender crescent trembling in the air currents of dawn. The clear sky of Zimmerwald revealed some star-sights in my small telescope which had not been resolvable in England. One evening after sunset a brilliant light shone out from the crest of the Finsteraarhorn. What could it be? I rushed for my telescope in wild excitement, but it was only the moon rising. She sailed aloft in full-orbed splendour—a memorable sight. Thus by day there were mountains and forests, by night the stars; it was a life of swiftly changing emotions which no one else could share or understand, for I was incapable of giving them expression.

Freed from Zimmerwald, we went to the Schweizerhof, at Lucerne, my first experience of a large hotel. It impressed me enormously, and so did everything else—the view of the lake, the organ recital in the church, Thorwaldsen's Lion, Pilatus, the covered bridge—I weltered in novelties. An expedition to the Rigi failed. We were too proud to go up by train and too slow to reach the top in time if we were to catch the last boat for Brunnen and join the parents that evening at Axenstein. The Staffel was our highest point. We ignominiously descended by rail. At Axenstein both mountains and water were closer at hand than at Zimmerwald. We were perched on a high promontory overlooking two arms of the lake, and had

a considerable hill behind. Two days of steady rain dammed back my enthusiasm, but on the third, in company with a young companion, I was able to walk up the Frohnalpstock, the first Alpine summit I ever attained—6,296 feet high, as I proudly registered—but the summit was enveloped in dense clouds, and there was no view. The glory of the ascent was, however, joy enough. Day after day it rained, but on the fourth fate was kind, and we set out to climb the Mythen. It looks such a precipitous peak from the lake, but a path leads right to the top, and there is no glory in the scramble. This time we had a clear view all round and the sense of being perched aloft on a real peak. How many ranges and lakes we overlooked I cannot remember. All that remains with me is the great emotion of beholding so much at once. Schwyz was at our feet like the map of a town. The lake stretched away in its deep hollow round the foot of the Rigi. The Oberland giants just showed in the far distance. I think what impressed me most was the Swiss plain stretching away and away like the counties from the Worcestershire Beacon. But it was not so much what I saw as the fact that I had climbed a real peak that kindled my enthusiastic joy. I knew now just what I wanted to do—to climb peak after peak, all the peaks in the Alps, all the mountains in the world. Every other occupation seemed trifling compared with that. I came down from the Mythen, like Moses from Sinai, bearing with me the law of my life.

The next day opened for us a new and thrilling adventure—a three-days' drive over the Furka Pass

and down the Rhone valley. I sat gloriously on the box by the driver, my sisters in the *banquette*, my parents inside, and the luggage behind. It was a wonderful experience, and stands for me as emblem of those romantic drives over Europe of which we have been robbed by railways. It would weary the reader were I to tell him all the emotional happenings of those unequalled days. The growing wildness of the scenery as we mounted the valley of the Reuss thrilled me to the core, culminating at the Devil's Bridge. Even the mouth of the St. Gothard tunnel, then a-drilling, seemed more remarkable than that of any other tunnel in the world. The bald scenery surrounding Andermatt caused no disillusion, for were there not patches of real snow visible not so very far away?

I was far too excited next day to sit in the carriage during its slow ascent of the Furka, but hurried ahead and made short cuts at the zigzags, thus arriving near the top some hours in advance. Patches of snow lay about. I said to myself that I was above the snow-line. The snout of the Tiefen glacier was within reach. I climbed to it—a real glacier at last, with crevasses. From the pass itself the wonderful view dwarfed every previous experience, for there in front was the shattered ice-fall of the Rhone glacier, with *névé* above it and the Galenstock on high; but the Finsteraarhorn (I believe it was the Finsteraarhorn) overpowered every other peak and almost crushed me with its visible enormity. Glaciers had already taken hold of my imagination, and I had read about them in Tyndall's books, though I can't exactly remember

when. An unfailing attendant at his winter lectures to children at the Royal Institution, I conceived him to be about the greatest man alive, and was ready to worship at any shrine where he ministered. The fact that he loved mountains gave a welcome sanction to my own enthusiasm, which found little echo in the home circle. The approach, therefore, to the bank of the ice-fall, where veritable *séracs* were visible near at hand, was felt to be an immense opportunity. Even the long afternoon drive down the Rhone valley, with the Weisshorn resplendent at the end of it, paled into insignificance compared with the high emotion roused by a passing vision of some of the mysteries of the abode of snow.

A night at Brieg, a morning's drive to Visp, a joyous farewell to the old people, and we three youngsters were off on our own to join friends for a few days at Zermatt. Proud commander of the caravan I marched up the valley, my sisters and the baggage on mules, and felt as though we were off for a journey of exploration through untravelled lands. In twelve miles that adventure ended, and the remainder of the way was accomplished in a springless carriage. A party of four sunburnt American climbers, with two guides, followed. They were to me no less than Homeric heroes. All went smoothly as far as Randa, but a little beyond the road was destroyed for a hundred yards or more by the bursting of a glacier lake or other high mountain cistern. Where the road should have been was a wide cataract, rolling stones down with it and raging furiously. Helped by a number of

assembled villagers we got across, leaping from stone to stone and walking along planks, but to bring over the vehicles seemed impossible. Presently the torrent widened and shallowed, so that the men could half drag half carry them over. Without further adventure or sight of the beclouded Matterhorn we joined our friends at the Mont Cervin Hotel.

Next day, of course, we climbed the Gornergrat. The weather was perfect. For the first time I looked down upon all the course of a great glacier and beheld snow-mountains from relatively near at hand. Curiously enough I cannot definitely remember the impression made upon me by that wonderful view. I only recall sitting with my legs over the edge of the cliff and intensely enjoying that novel position. The Hörnli was another goal, but my party only reached the Schwarzsee. At the moment of return I encountered a solitary Englishman. Joining on to him, we abandoned the others and continued the ascent. We reached the crest of the ridge, and there, finding traces of a party at that moment climbing the Cervin, gloriously followed their illustrious footsteps, even to the rocks of the mountain itself. That crowded hour of life will never be forgotten. Sunday followed, and beyond it but one day more of this Paradise before we had to start for home. I longed inexpressibly to spend it on the Cima di Jazzi, the highest flight my imagination could dare; but an even more dazzling prospect opened. Hunting up my friend of the Hörnli at the Monte Rosa Hotel, I put my plan before him. His answer was that he had arranged to go to the St.

Théodule Pass next morning, perhaps also up the Breithorn, and that I might come with him if I would. Would I not? How I thanked my stars there were no parents about to interpose refusal. I went to bed in the seventh heaven of expectation, and when roused at three in the morning received the summons with unique acquiescence.

Breakfast was at the Monte Rosa Hotel, but my companion still slumbered. He said he was ill. After infinite trouble I shifted him. My own breakfast was glorified by the presence of Passingham, a climber whose feats commanded my unbounded admiration. Had he not recently ascended all the giants about, each in succession in a single day from Zermatt? Surely such companionship was an admission to the illustrious brotherhood. The weather promised badly. The sky was overclouded; there was a south wind; the glass had fallen. Little cared I if only my man would start. Then his boots were uncomfortable, and had to be unlaced and relaced again and yet again. He did not want to go. It was five o'clock before I got him on the road. I longed to make up for lost time by hurrying. He was a slow walker. However, we did make progress, and at last reached the edge of the glacier and halted for breakfast. Presently another halt was called that my companion might take a dose of medicine—fifteen minutes lost. Then he must stop again to relace his boots. I could have beaten in his skull, but had enough gumption to know that tender handling was essential, or he would turn back and destroy my hopes. That we were actually on a *névé*

with hidden crevasses in it was already a huge joy. What mattered the thick coating of new snow into which we sank deeply or that there were many clouds about? The Cervin was clear. I could see the Italian *arête* and recognise its various features immortalised for me by the heroic exploits of Tyndall and Whymper.

On the pass a thick mist drove in our faces. Rocks dimly loomed through it; the snowfield melted away in its vagueness. We entered the hut, my companion with joy, I with foreboding. He evidently wanted that to be the end, but I was aflame with ambition to climb the Breithorn. The mere figures of its altitude, 13,685 feet, were intoxicating. An hour passed and still he would not move. He was drying his socks at the fire. It took another half-hour to kindle his feeble enthusiasm and lace his boots satisfactorily, but we got him going at last, the guide and I. The weather was not so bad. There were many rifts in the clouds, and glimpses over the Italian foothills. To be roped together, wading a snowfield, was a rapturous delight. I had not the least feeling of fatigue and scarcely knew I had a body. Then came the long and rather steep slope and a hundred and fifty steps to be cut. What more could one desire who before had only read about step-cutting? At last we reached the summit. An incredible adventure was accomplished, and my satisfaction knew no bounds. If ever milestone was erected along the road of life, one was then set up for me.

Our guide, whose name I do not remember, but

*Photo : Spencer.*

THE CERVIN, FROM THE TÊTE BLANCHE.

from internal evidence I guess he may have been Franz Biener, thoroughly entered into the spirit of my mood. Through holes in the clouds he showed me Milan, Turin, and half Lombardy. I am sure he would not have boggled at the Mediterranean itself if I had asked for it. It is my impression that we really saw little; what I do remember is the big crevasses and other features of the *névé*, the step-cutting, the glossy ice-patches, the shattered rocks of the Little Matterhorn; and how different all these features looked from near at hand than from far away. They were even stranger thus and not a whit less romantic; but in truth the mystery of the other world, as I had conceived it from Zimmerwald, was passing. I had already learnt that the Cervin was not a solid, changeless rock, but a mass of shattered ruin, with stones continually falling down its flanks. The strangeness, the inhospitality to man of the snow regions was, however, obvious enough to replace the mystery of distance by a new romanticism.

My companion's laziness henceforward stood me in good stead. It prolonged our stay on the summit, and occasioned many halts on the descent. A wild glissade carried us down to the snowfield. We were back at the hut on the col quite quickly. There we halted again, and my companion now informed me that he was not going down to Zermatt, but to the Riffel. It was eight o'clock before we had descended on to the Gorner Glacier, crossed it, climbed the cliff beyond, and approached the hotel. The excitement was over; night was coming on. I had but a dim

idea of the way to Zermatt, and no lantern. I said good-bye to my companion and hurried downward. The path was soon lost, and so was I. Whymper's remembered adventure under like circumstances decided me to climb again to the Riffelhaus, whose lights were still visible. There I obtained the services of a guide and ran down with him to join my anxious friends at Zermatt. It gave me unspeakable joy to learn that they had been thinking of sending out a search-party after me.

From a stretch of the Visp valley road the Breithorn is in full view. The reader may imagine with what feelings I gazed up at it during our downward journey on the following day. We drove from Visp to Sierre, slept there, and proceeded by train the following day to Vevey and Chexbres, stopping *en route* to see the gloomy and booming grandeurs of the Gorge du Trient. From the road to St. Maurice the sharp peaks of the Dent du Midi attracted my passing wonder, and later on its broad face, as seen from the Lake of Geneva, filled me with admiration. Carfrae, who had been my protector at Zermatt, though not on the Breithorn, was at Chexbres, and there were still two days to spare. When he suggested that we should spend them in an ascent of the Dent du Midi my cup of joy overflowed. True, that peak is only 10,696 feet high, a dwarf compared with the Breithorn, but it has the air of a great mountain, and when presented end on, as we had seen it from the train, it looks deceptively inaccessible. Next day we went by boat and train to Monthey, walked up

the pretty Val d'Illiez to Champéry, engaged Pierre Caillet as guide, and slept in a châlet on the Bonaveau Alp. It consisted of three communicating compartments. One contained cows and sheep; the next was given over to cheese-making; the third held beds for the accommodation of strangers, already in part occupied by four Frenchmen. The bedding was a heap of hay covered by a sheet and equipped with a blanket. The sheet soon wandered and the hay got loose; we slept in it rather than upon it. It swarmed with life. Before three o'clock we were off, following a lantern. An invisible torrent roared near at hand. One reach of the narrow path was called the Mauvais Pas, for no special reason, but it added to the day's glory. All was easy enough, but for me most exciting—the darkness, the noise, the flashing of the light on partly disclosed shapes, our own moving shadows. Imagined precipices were close below us. Orion lying on his side was rising in the East. Thus we came out into daylight and the opener valley between our mountain and the snowy Tour Sallières. After breakfasting we turned up to the ridge and followed it a while, with a cliff falling away on one hand, a scree-slope on the other. Finally we took to the screes on the south face and slithered and pounded up them and the south-east ridge to the top. No ascent could have been simpler, but a fervid imagination magnified each of its details to heroic dimensions. If we started a shoot of stones it seemed to me a stone-avalanche. Every gully might be stone-swept, and emergence from it a fortunate escape. I believed the

ridge to be a narrow *arête*, such as I had read of. A little snow in a sloping hollow qualified it to be called a *couloir*.

By nine o'clock we were on the top, and all the Mont Blanc range was spread out before us, cloudless and clear in every detail. It is a wonderful view—the great mountains on one side, the lake on the other, with far away Jura and the Swiss lowlands beyond. Only in the north were there any clouds, just a line of them, floating peacefully above the well-defined horizon with a strip of blue between. It was the first characteristic high mountain panorama I had beheld, and the first time I had seen Mont Blanc. Nothing more perfect could have closed my first Alpine season. Much of the view photographed itself in my memory and remains with me to-day, especially the contrast between the brilliant snow ranges on one side and the extraordinarily peaceful aspect of the lower hills and the lake on the other.

The descent was a bagatelle. We ran down the screes, and were often carried by them, thus quickly reaching the col at the foot of the Tour Sallières. Grass slopes followed. In due time we reached the edge of a cliff and looked down on the Gorge du Trient Hotel. The meandering road lengthened the descent to it beyond all expectation, but we arrived at the railway station at last, and at Chexbres about one o'clock on Sunday morning. On Monday we started for England and school.

Thus ended the most fateful six weeks of my life. They not merely decided ambitions for me, but

fashioned tastes. I had awakened to the beauty of the world. My horizon was no longer England. I had discovered the romance of movement. All the realms of art remained closed, but Nature had opened wide her doors. The mountain-world had become, and was long to remain, the home of my fancy. Though it was no longer a vague fairyland, it retained its mystery and had gained in magnificence. I had touched only the fringe of its garment, but that contact had given me life. I returned to the duties of every day as to a strange country, leaving my heart behind in the hills.

## CHAPTER IV

### TIROL

A SUMMER in England, another in Ireland, Belgium, and on the Rhine intervened before I saw the Alps again. By that time I was an undergraduate at Cambridge, and went abroad with an orthodox reading party. It must be regarded as a lucky chance that took us in 1875 to Sterzing, on the Brenner railway, for it not only plunged us into the midst of wonderful scenery, but carried us right back into the Middle Ages. The little town contained in the core of it not a single modern house. It was pure fifteenth and sixteenth century. The people lived according to old tradition, grandparents, parents, children and farm labourers all in one house together. Every afternoon, returned from the fields, they prayed loudly in family assemblies, saying so many Aves and Paternosters, the housefather and his dependents in alternation. The whole town resounded with prayer. At night the watchman went his rounds, singing the hour and calling for care of fire and lights, "that no mischance may happen." Much of the furniture of the houses was old. It was a wonderful place. Its effect upon me was that of an agreeable strangeness, one of the nice things of "abroad." But the effect sunk in, and when later I became an archæologist, memories of Sterzing were found to carry me not merely away

to Tirol, but back into the past. For three months we lived in the Middle Ages. Had Kaiser Max come riding down the main street, as in life he often rode, he would have seen little to give him the shock of novelty.

Sterzing is not a mountaineering centre, but from it several valleys radiate toward various mountain groups. It is a day's journey to reach any of them. Often at sunset the Dolomites, perhaps Tofana and Cristallo, flamed crimson far away down the main valley to the south-east. Two parallel valleys to the west emerge from the snowy mass of the Stubai group. The railway led to the Brenner Pass, some twelve miles to the north. Eastward the Pfitscherthal went straight for the Hochfeiler, highest of the Zillerthal Alps.

It took us some time to realise these simple geographical facts, for no good maps existed and there were no local guides. A few brave chamois hunters had a practical knowledge of the parts visited by them in pursuit of game, but that did not include routes of ascent to mountain summits. There was not an ice-axe, nor any man that knew the use of one, within a circuit of twenty miles. It was, in fact, by actual walking up the various radiating valleys and by scrambling up the nearest hills that we gradually learned the local topography, and this process was an important element in the education of at least one of us. By the time we left the country, after a three months' stay, I had obtained a general knowledge of how this particular district was shaped, how the

valleys spread and the ridges between them branched. The lesson thus learned was of universal applicability.

If we had not been a real reading party we might have accomplished much more climbing among the snows. As it was we only snatched week-ends, and they were often rainy. At Zermatt I had at least absorbed some idea of the technique of the modern climber's craft at the stage depicted in Whymper's "Scrambles." Around Sterzing we were, however, in this matter also back in the Middle Ages—no guides, no maps, no traditions, no known routes. No one could tell us what peaks had been climbed or whence. Even the names of the mountains were seldom certainly known. Of our party I alone had any climbing experience or enthusiasm. My particular friend, F. O. Bower (now a learned professor, F.R.S., etc.), proved a cordial second. For me, therefore, it was an emotionally tantalising season. The snow-world was as attractive as ever, but it was generally just out of reach. The peaks, moreover, were relatively small and lacked the glamour of fame. The intelligence was awakened more than the emotions by this summer's experiences. True, there was a considerable element of exploration about our longer expeditions. We had always to find the way, and when we crossed a pass we seldom knew exactly where it was going to bring us out. Exploration is always exciting. Our most ambitious effort was to climb the Zuckerhütl, the highest of the Stubai group, but we did not succeed, and had to be content with nearer peaks—the Wilder Freiger and the Botzer—when

distance proved too great. We knew that the higher summit had been reached by a snow *arête*. Judging that steps would have to be cut, I caused a rude pick to be made by the local blacksmith. It was far too heavy, and no opportunity of using it for the intended purpose arrived, but in later years it fulfilled a useful function in my coal cellar, and may still be serving.

My diary is full of topographical details, and but rarely bursts into turgid declamation over the glories of the view. In fact, only two scenes have imprinted themselves upon my memory: the flaming Dolomites at sunset, and the white wall of the Uebelthal Icefall beheld at dawn shining beyond the dark gorge below the glacier's snout. I also recall with delight hours of wandering up and down some lovely valleys beside laughing waters and through deep-shadowed forests. For the most part it was the phenomena of Nature and their meaning that kept my attention on the stretch and are recorded in my journal. Traces of former glacier action are frequently referred to, *moutonnés* rocks, ice-scratchings, and their direction as showing which way the ice had flowed; old moraines, too, and other signs of previous extension of the ice sheet. On the top of the Botzer, through gaps in clouds, I am taking the bearings of peaks with a prismatic compass and identifying them on a bad map. There are frequent readings of the barometer and deductions of the height. Temperature is not estimated, but measured. The mental attitude is that of science rather than wonder. I am always sketching, but the sketches aim at accuracy of mountain form

with special reference to the distribution of the snow, hardly ever at an enjoyed effect. Each peak has been carefully identified and named; there are references to its aspect from other points of view. In all this there is little romance. Something, indeed, must be allowed for the almost unbroken badness of the weather. Of the four highest summits we reached, we were in fog on three and among broken clouds on the other. My companions were students of mathematics. Rigid dynamics was my own subject of study. Hence the poetic aspect of things gave way to the scientific and rapture was replaced by efforts toward intelligent comprehension.

The composition of our party provided compensations which were to be of a permanently moulding value. If my friends were not wild lovers of mountain beauty, two of them were serious musicians and others were imbued with a nascent enthusiasm for works of art. On their way out some had stopped at Munich, and brought away photographs of admired Old Masters. My single link with them at first was the fact that, the year before, I had seen the Rubens pictures at Antwerp, and vaguely wondered at them, though actually without delight. These photographs formed frequent subject of discussion and stimulated a desire in me to behold the originals and share the pleasure so obviously felt by my friends. Our musicians performed on the violin and the 'cello. At Sterzing they found among the inhabitants the competent completion of a string quartette which met frequently at our inn. A local glee club had the

same rendezvous. These influences first set the gates of Art ajar for me.

At the end of the season we scattered to return by various routes. Some made away over the mountains, intending to climb the Gross Glockner, but came into a deluge and presently quarrelled. I hurried down into the Pusterthal, caught the train at Bruneck, and made straight for Munich, picking up Bower *en route*. The fortnight spent in the galleries there and at Dresden, Berlin and Hamburg had a determining influence upon another life than that with which these chapters deal.

# CHAPTER V

## THE ENGADINE

THE mountain goddess attracts her votaries in many different ways. Some fall victims to her charms at once. She summons and they follow. No sooner do they come within the range of her power than they submit and are her willing captives. In my case the attraction was of too early origin and slow growth to be thus overwhelming. She called, indeed, but I was not free to follow, did not even for many years recognise the nature of the summons. The longing was deeply implanted, but not clearly felt till the summer of 1876 found me able blithely to yield to what had become an irresistible impulse. Why the Engadine was chosen as scene of my acknowledged courtship of Our Lady of the Snows memory, much cudgelled, refuses to reveal. But so it was, and Pontresina during five blissful weeks saw my somewhat blundering efforts to come to terms with this enthralling mistress. I went forth from England fully equipped for the first time with axe and rope—the same axe which was thenceforward to the end my faithful companion, though, truth to tell, it received a new head, stick and point at different times.

Even the callowest modern climber cannot put himself back to the mental state of a mountaineering novice in the early 'seventies. The dramatic tragedy

of the Matterhorn had struck the imagination of the world. It had invested high mountains with the reputation of vengefulness. Those who would profane the forbidden solitudes were popularly regarded as reckless and almost impious adventurers who deserved the punishment they carelessly invited. The mediæval terror of the high regions as the home of Pontius Pilate and the spirits of the damned lingered on in the valleys of the Alps, and even the best guides, at times of storm and darkness, often went in terror of ghosts and ghouls and evil spirits in uncanny places. Fatal accidents kept prejudice alive. If climbers reaped in some quarters an unmerited reputation for hardihood, they had to bear counterbalancing criticism from their sedentary friends and relations.

It was, therefore, in a spirit of caution and humility that I entered upon my first regular mountaineering season. The highest Engadine peaks figured upon my list of climbs hoped for, but they were not in the line of those first to be attacked. The tame monotony of Piz Corvatsch, climbed in company with a third-rate guide, taught me to seek a better leader and a nobler type of mountain. The Piz Morteratsch was suggested, and the climb duly and uneventfully accomplished with a hotel acquaintance as companion and Johann Gross as leader. The ascent was full of interest, the view splendid and instructive. The long snow *arête* of Piz Bernina, end on, was its revealing and, to me, wholly novel feature. Narrow and gracefully bending to this side and that, steep rocks on one face, avalanche slopes of

snow on the other, it realised at a glance all and more than all that I had expected an *arête* to be. Desire arose to be there, to be on that thread-like crest with nothingness on either hand and the blue sky above.

We were to descend on the other side of our mountain toward the Morteratsch glacier, the route followed a few years before by Tyndall when he nearly lost his life in an avalanche. One of his most vivid descriptions of mountain adventure had been greedily absorbed by me, and was pictured and remembered in every detail. It galvanised expectation, notwithstanding our guide's assurance that in existing conditions the snow would be in a safe state and we should pass over the dangerous slope without difficulty or peril.

The descent followed easy snow slopes for a considerable time. We traversed them obliquely, with a ridge above on our left hand and some cliffs below on our right. As long as the cliffs lasted they held up the snowfield and made its slope gentle, but where they ceased the slope fell steeply away, breaking below into ice-walls. We had to make a descending traverse across this steep and ever, as we advanced, steepening snow curtain. For ten minutes or more progress was rapid and the snow good; then it became soft and almost slushy, a foot or more thick, lying upon smooth, hard, blue ice. To my callow inexperience it seemed that the whole mass was in a condition of unstable equilibrium, and might give way at any moment, but we were well advanced into the middle of the danger before its imminence was fully realised.

The guide was obviously and confessedly anxious. With the superstition of his locality he believed that the human voice was an efficient avalanche starter. He commanded absolute silence and the greatest care in moving from step to step. With much deliberation he cut large steps in the subjacent ice. The air was still; absolute silence reigned; the afternoon sun burnt down upon us with scorching fierceness. A strange agitation invaded all my being. I was no doubt frightened and knew it, and determined that no one else should guess; but there was much more than terror: there was an extraordinary exaltation, such as Ulysses may have felt when he heard the Sirens sing. The slope was cracked right across close at hand. That was where the mass would split. I watched the crack as in a dream, not doubting but that a catastrophe would soon happen and we should be flying downward in a chaos of tumbling snow.

Our advance was very slow. There was a patch of rock ahead where we should be in safety for a while, but it seemed to keep its distance. I thought of nothing in the world but the present emotion. That was overwhelming, terrible, delightful, indescribable. Once the footing gave way under my companion, who was last on the rope, and he shot downward; I was, luckily, able to stand the pull on the rope and to hold him up. That act altered the whole tone of my thoughts and gave me a new courage. The strain of doing nothing and merely waiting was broken by a moment of activity—a thrill of joy. We reached the rock island at last. Beyond

came a broad snow *couloir* in yet worse condition than the preceding slope. This was where Tyndall was carried away. The last man hung on to the rocks till the latest possible moment—not very long. All were soon on the unstable slope and apparently in the hands of fate, to fall or cross as she might decide. The time of peril seemed endless; indeed, the very sense of time ceased. Arrival at a patch of rock on the other side was like coming to after an anæsthetic. I awoke to find myself suddenly in the world of living people, with a future to look forward to as well as a past to remember. It was sheer delight to look back upon our tracks. Reaction set in with relief of tension. We ran down the rest of the way, the mind purged, as after some grand drama, by terror if not also by pity.

The above description is as truthful as I can make it after forty-three years. Modern climbers may read it with a smile. Probably we much over-estimated our danger. I have crossed many such slopes since with a better understanding of the condition of the snow and the practical certainty that, for all its apparent looseness, it would hold. That kind of knowledge comes to an amateur by experience. It is almost the birthright of a good guide. Gross, I imagine, knew what he was about, but was not unwilling to exalt his functions and obtain recognition for bringing us safely through a believed peril. It is, however, not the fact but the emotion that concerns us here. As I look back the facts appear doubtful; but the emotion was real and, as it proved, infinitely

precious. To have stood for an hour on end face to face with death, come to grips with that situation and won through, was and was to remain an experience of incalculable value. It covered the vague mystery of the mountains with a mantle of tragedy. The fair lady had shown me not merely her beauty, but her latent dread. Henceforward a higher reverence entered into my worship of her. Though she kill me, yet must I love her. I came down from the mountain far more enthralled than ever.

The white *arête* of the Bernina hovered in my remembrance weirdly attractive. Gross told me that no one had ever tried to climb it. The first serious attack on it was, in fact, made by Middlemore and Cordier a few days later. I decided to essay it alone with Gross. Early one morning, after an ended spell of bad weather, we found ourselves at the foot of the steep little glacier that falls westward from the saddle between the Bernina and the Morteratsch peaks. We made every conceivable blunder in choice of route by striking up the south instead of the north side of this glacier, thus having to cut steps on the most part of 800 feet of a steepish slope of snow and occasional ice instead of mounting on or near some easy rocks. We ought to have known that the first thing to do was to reach the saddle and mount the *arête* from its end, but we kept inclining away to the right, and so came into serious difficulties among rather smooth rocks infested with new ice. If we had followed this line long enough we should have struck the ridge some distance above the saddle. We had finally to

abandon the attempt to climb right up to the *arête* after a thousand steps had been cut. We reached it by a horizontal traverse. For lack of time the further ascent had to be abandoned. We descended the ridge to the saddle instead of climbing it to Bernina's white and virgin peak.

The saddle itself commanded glorious views, the first I had ever beheld from a narrow, high pass. A rock wall fell away steeply on the east; scarcely less steep was the other slope up which we had ascended. The Morteratsch rocks on one hand, the Bernina *arête* on the other framed the two pictures—eastward, the Morteratsch *névé*, the Ortler, and beyond; westward, towering Piz Roseg and the far-away Bernese Oberland. The day was cloudless, the scene superb. I had all the emotions of the first human being to behold it. It was my very own. My enduring preference for views from passes over those from peaks probably took root at this moment. A panorama is a bewildering and glorious sight, but a restless one. It keeps the spectator turning round and round. From a pass, especially a narrow pass, you have but two directions in which to look and the views are framed. In this case both were admirably composed and are, in my matured judgment, exceptionally beautiful.

I wanted to descend the side we had not come up and so traverse the pass. The rocks, though steep, were practicable, and once down them the remainder of the way could scarcely present very serious impediments. Gross was on the point of agreeing to start when the lowest shoulder of the Bernina discharged

its snow-mantle in a beautiful avalanche. The funnel shape of the ground gathered all the snow into a single shoot and discharged it down a *couloir* close at hand in the rocks we sat on. We watched it pursuing its way far below down a deep groove in the lower snow-slope, saw it disappear over a fold, then reappear spreading out on the snow-cone at the bottom, thus following the well-marked route of its countless predecessors, and coming to rest with them at the glacier level. Its thunderous cry enveloped us as in a cloud of sound. It came back to us from far below and re-echoed from the remote hollows of the mountains. Silence did not return for several minutes. Gross was now unwilling to attempt the descent, so we had to go back by the side of our climb, but following the better and easier route we ought to have chosen in the morning.

The pass had rooted itself in my fancy. It had to be traversed. Two excellent climbers, Wainwright and Warren, caught the infection and agreed to come with me. Hans Grass, the best local guide at that time, was to be our leader, and Gross our second guide. A night was spent at the old Boval Hut, a fine shelter as we then thought, but very different from the luxurious type of modern cabane. It was just a low stone hut built against a great rock. The wind whistled through it. Across one end was a hay-covered shelf for general bed. A table was fixed in one of the remaining corners, and the fire burnt in the other. We left its protection at an early hour next morning, and marched in bright moonlight up

the Morteratsch glacier toward the foot of its ice-fall. The shivered *séracs* were shining like frosted silver. It was my first experience of climbing with competent companions behind a first-rate guide. I trembled with delighted expectation. The cold air seemed laden with the very spirit of romance.

On reaching the foot of the glacier-filled gully leading up to our pass, we turned at right angles and attacked the slope. The novelty of the expedition had begun. A mountain on either hand shut us in between precipitous walls of rock. A narrow glacier broken into ice-falls at two levels filled our gully and ended above in the wall of rock down which I had gazed from the pass. We turned the ice-falls by their rocky banks and mounted the intervening snow-slopes by chipped steps. The snow was lined up and down by numerous parallel grooves, often but a few feet apart, each the track of stones that had fallen. There was a great furrow in the midst some ten feet or more deep, the route of such avalanches as I had seen tumbling. We had to use this dangerous furrow to cross the wide *bergschrund* near the foot of the final slope, for only there was that huge crevasse bridged. Just as we were about to adventure into it a crashing and rattling burst forth aloft, and a few stones shot by down the furrow with great velocity; but that was all. We crossed in safety and climbed out of the trough on the other side. The blue depths of the *bergschrund* were of transcendent beauty. Icicles hung from the upper lip. It was a fairy hollow to dream of but not to linger over.

The final scramble up the wall of rocks (some 500 feet) was sheer delight. It brought us under the outjutting snow cornice which defends the actual pass. Through a narrow gap we gained the saddle, and were joyously breakfasting upon it at nine o'clock. No other stones had fallen during our ascent save those we started. It was pure good luck, for the name since given to the pass we thus for the first time traversed is Fuorcla Prievlusa, or the "dangerous." Modern climbers and guides describe it as stone-swept. I am told that the description is apt, and that stones often pour down the gully and sweep it from side to side. The numerous grooves in the snow-slopes are thus accounted for. Of all this we saw nothing.

No ascent has ever given me more unalloyed pleasure. Everything was new. Beauty reigned in all directions. Never had I been so happy. The Queen of the Snows smiled and displayed all her grace. She lapped us in air of clearest crystal. She spread abroad her most lovely garments. Jewels sparkled upon her. She seemed to be surrendering her very heart, and mine was already hers. There was plenty of time to spare. When the others started down I still lingered with Gross. It was noon before I could tear myself away, carrying with me precious memories which have not faded.

That same evening I slept out for Piz Palü, and traversed its long crest next day, reaching Pontresina just in time to hurry off to yet another *gîte* and sleep out for the third night in succession in order to

capture the Piz Roseg while the fine weather held. How could one feel fatigue amid such experiences? The third climb was the longest and most sensational. Palü's snow-crest, festooned from peak to peak, is in places narrow, but is far surpassed in dramatic quality by the *arête* of Piz Roseg. Like a giant spear held aloft the summit burst with startling defiance upon our vision at the moment of arrival upon the lower peak, after seven hours' ascent from the hut. We were forewarned and expectant, but the thing beheld surpassed expectation. We had climbed in a gale of wind and with little hope of final success. The gale added to the effect. Slenderer and longer *arêtes* than that which connects the two summits exist, but this is slender and long enough. The slopes on either hand plunge to abysses that seem immeasurable. That on the right is a cliff of rock; the other is a sheer curtain of ice, smooth and relentless. It leads down to the crest of the saddle, known as Güssfeldt's, from which a famous ice-wall falls to the glacier-floor. The precipices of Bernina impend beyond a narrow glacier-arm. In the midst of these majestic surroundings the knife-edged *arête* rises like the flight of an arrow to the highest peak. Adding to its beauty at that moment, a delicately transparent veil of countless tiny ice-particles carried by the wind waved upon the crest. They swept hissing up the slope on one side, curled gracefully over the top, and fell on the other. Ice-crystals glittered everywhere in the bright sunshine. The cold was bitter. It seemed as though any creature that stood upon that narrow ridge must

be blown away. Nevertheless we advanced toward it. As we approached the gale dropped; the sun warmed us, and we could accomplish the tight-rope performance quickly. In thirty-five minutes we had chopped off the sharp snow summit and stood one by one in its place. Just down on the west side the rocks formed natural arm-chairs, with nothing between them and remote Mont Blanc; we rested there for two glorious hours before turning to descend.

A spell of enforced idleness followed these three exciting days. When the weather settled I was able to climb Piz Bernina. The route followed led me for the first time through really superb ice-scenery. We had to turn the great ice-fall of the Morteratsch glacier by a traverse across a slope of ice under overhanging *séracs* and above a vertical cliff. The piled debris of fallen *séracs* at the foot of the cliff showed the dangers of the way; not that such evidence was necessary, for the huge ice-towers in many places overhung, and it was evident that some of them were doomed to fall. So early in the morning, frost doubtless held them fast, but it would be otherwise in the afternoon, when we must return by the same route.

On the main body of the mountain we wrought a way among the yawning crevasses of a much-tortured *névé*. The magic *bergschrund* I had looked into on the way up our pass was trifling in comparison with these immense caverns. The surface through which they opened shone blindingly white under the high sun. Their depths were indigo-blue. The walls shimmered with every intervening tint. They were

not mere slab-sided ditches, but variegated with every conceivable intricacy of form; here opening into grottoes, there piled with fallen masses of banded ice; here bulging, there overhanging, and everywhere draped with fringes of icicles slender as a twig or massive as the trunks of ancient trees. Fancy cannot picture a more romantic scene than these *névé* crevasses displayed. Moreover they were not parallel gashes in an even slope, but steps in a giant staircase, ruinous as vast. High walls of ice stood up, and longitudinal sections cut the great steps into cubes which sloped this way and that. Towers and spires had cracked off from the larger masses, and leaned to one side or the other. We had to cut steps and swarm up such a pinnacle as the only way to attain an upper level against which it rested. Usually we found bridges of ice, massive or frail, but always of unexpected form and entrancing architecture. Some two hours may have been spent in this exotic fairyland before the main *arête* was reached. It is of rock, with one short wall of snow, excessively narrow—so narrow, in fact, that you cannot traverse on either side, but must walk balanced on its very crest in steps carefully fashioned, a rare experience.

If we lingered long on the cloudless summit and were slow in the descent, it was because that return traverse under the impending *séracs* threatened in the background of our minds. Assuredly it dyed all the emotions of the day for me, not always unpleasantly, not to the exclusion but rather to the heightening of merriment, yet infusing into each vision of wonder

or beauty a certain solemnity, as of a sight beheld not for the first time only, but it might be for the last. It created a mood which was projected on to the scenery. When Matthew Arnold wrote:

> The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
> But to the stars and the pale moonlight's beams;
> Alone the sun uprises and alone
> Spring the great streams.

he was expressing a subjective mood by a series of statements, each separately untrue. The solemn peaks are known to the sun and the clouds and so forth as much as to stars and moonlight; but the mood of a man embraces and refashions all he beholds, and thus comes back to him from Nature. He sees his own heart in the landscape and, truthfully expressing his emotion, describes it in terms of the external world. Not only will the eye be blind to such visions as it has not previously acquired power to see, but the heart will not throb save to emotions already potential within itself. Even the sight of danger will not appal one who has not the knowledge to recognise it, while a safe situation will affright when it is believed to be perilous. Thus also the eye will only weep in the presence of a glory which the imagination has flung over the bare prose of Nature. To the believer alone will God be manifest in the material world.

When we reached the dangerous traverse the afternoon was well advanced and the sun shining hotly upon the *séracs*. If in dim light and from below they had seemed threatening, now in the blaze of day

and beheld from above they appeared far more unstable. Indeed, in the case of one or two, their upstanding at all seemed miraculous. There was nothing to be gained by hesitation. We went straight for the passage, the leader trimming with a chip, or at most two, each of our rounded steps of the morning. Our hearts were in our throats; mine was thumping. When about half-way over we heard a little crackling and crashing above, and a few lumps of ice came down, broke into fragments on the slope, and fell about us. The overthrow of a glacial tower is often preceded by such small movements, as in later years along the sea-fronts of Arctic glaciers I had many opportunities of observing. The effect upon us was like the sting of a whip. We took all chances with the old steps and hurried on with utmost speed. Nor did we linger on the other side, for the avalanche debris below had still to be crossed, and were they not the result of just such crashes as the one we were momentarily expecting? The best we could do was to keep as far round as possible. The whole danger was safely passed when we had turned the base of a rock ridge and our enemy was out of sight. A few minutes later the thunder of an ice-avalanche roared behind the corner in the direction and evident neighbourhood of the *séracs* we had so recently escaped.

After a few more climbs and some valley wandering the season ended for me, and with it the years of apprenticeship. The greatly prized honour of election to the Alpine Club was mine before the following summer. It arrived a month or so too late to

be a coming-of-age present. In many respects the season had been a fortunate one. It had offered experiences of varied character: steep rocks, narrow snow *arêtes*, ice-slopes, avalanche and snow-slopes, *couloirs*, *séracs*, and other minor difficulties to negotiate. It had displayed examples of every kind of mountain and glacier feature. What had been but names, things read about before, had become realities: *bergschrunds*, all sorts of crevasses, open or hidden, ice-falls, moulins, glacier-tables, moraines. I had even been let down by the rope and had burrowed under a glacier between it and its rock-bed. Technically I had begun to learn how to use axe and rope. I had cut quantities of steps, necessary and unnecessary, and had wandered on glaciers, from snout to snow-field, alone or behind expert leaders. Confidence had replaced a certain shyness of the unknown. The world of ice and snow was no longer an utter mystery. It retained its aloofness, but had ceased to be altogether foreign.

Morally the gifts of that season were priceless. They had opened a new outlook upon life. The youth that returned was other than he that went forth. He had come face to face with Nature in many wonderful moods. If she had often smiled, she had likewise frowned. She had been gracious and alluring, but also austere, threatening, terrible, even on occasion hostile. The Babylonian conception of her as endowed with the face of a woman, the limbs of a lion and the claws of an eagle was felt to be not ungrounded. "*On ne badine pas avec*"—*la montagne* summed up

perhaps the lessons of the year. If, like a female spider, she might accept the advances of a lover, she was just as likely to turn and destroy him. The altar of the mountain-temple had reeked and would reek again with human sacrifice, and no worshipper could be sure that he would not be the chosen victim. Yet the attraction of the mountain goddess was irresistible. Reverence grew with knowledge—reverence, which is "the chief joy and pride of life." Who that has once felt it can ever forget the majesty of the high white world, overwhelming in glory as in gloom? The mountaineer should be like the fabled Indian lady "who braves the terrors of the black night and drenching storm, her trackless path lit only by flashes of lightning as she goes to visit her lover, yet knows no fear because Love is at her side."

What would a man know about mountains who knew them only in days of cloudless peace? He that would "enter into the treasures of the snow" must wander in high places in Nature's many moods. When the lightning is mated with the clouds, and when rain and snow-fall link earth and sky with silver cords, he must be a joyful onlooker and participant in the drama, even if he rejoice with trembling. To climb along a narrow beclouded ridge, when the gale sweeps across it and grasps at its crest, is a far more thrilling experience than to tread the slenderest *arête* in still air and clear sunshine. A tower of ice, whencesoever beheld, will be a brilliant thing, but the traveller who passes beneath one tottering to its fall will carry away a more vivid remembrance of its

grandeur. Such sights and memories are unpurchasable treasures which have to be won. No written record can transfer them, nor are they easily to be erased by the passage of time. When the climbing season of 1876 ended it left me thus gloriously enriched.

## CHAPTER VI

### ZERMATT IN 1877

IT is a law of human nature that the passion and enthusiasm, the painful longings and delirious delights which sweep through all our being when for the first time we penetrate into some new field of emotion do not maintain themselves permanently. Joys tend to become less overwhelming, desire less paralysing. We are not therefore less devoted, less admiring, less enthralled, but in fact the contrary. Devotion has become part of our very structure. We are reborn. The thing that was approached from without and desired has been absorbed; we have become part of it, as it of us. We are identified with the god. Thus the glory and high emotion of my Engadine season passed. It left me wedded to the mountains, vowed to be their faithful servant and to serve them with perfect love, but no longer stunned by a sense of their unapproachable glory.

There was, I imagine, little question but that the next summer should be spent at Zermatt. The modesty which had kept me away from that centre of illustrious peaks, reputed to be supremely difficult and even dangerous, according to the standard of those days, was replaced by a reasonable and tried confidence. Accompanied, therefore, by my old schoolfellow, George Scriven, the best climbing companion

man ever had, I made my way to Zermatt for the season of 1877, and was destined there to spend five out of the six following summers. The first year was, of course, the most thrilling. Till one had climbed some at least of the great peaks their prestige, especially that of the Cervin, remained imposing. Their glorious forms seemed to incorporate defiance. If the Cervin had impressed me as a boy, it became yet more impressive with added years and experience. To this day it affects me as does no other mountain. None is of nobler architecture. None combines such grace of outline with such a sense of uplift. Ruskin, with the insight of genius, compared it to a rearing horse with head thrown back. Its deceptive aspect of precipitousness does not change even to the instructed eye. Moreover, it is planted in a perfect position for visibility as from chosen platforms. It has not to be sought out. It stands forward and challenges. For long weeks we hesitated to accept that challenge, and contented ourselves with lesser engagements.

The ascent of Monte Rosa was our first serious enterprise. As I look back it appears significant that we avoided the ordinary line of ascent. We decided to climb it "by the rocks," and to that end made our way up the Grenz branch of the Gorner Glacier. The route brought us in view of the Zumstein Spitze and of the saddle between it and the highest point. On being informed, in response to inquiries, that the mountain had never been climbed from that saddle, we decided to make the attempt, and in due course arrived at the summit. The climb was not difficult,

and appears to have been accomplished in quick time. When, eight years later, Coolidge and I made the ascent of the Zumstein Spitze from the same saddle, we took as long to reach that starting point as had sufficed for the whole ascent of the higher peak. My own attitude of mind is clearly enough implied by the little account I wrote of our "New expedition." It had seemed a perilous and difficult accomplishment —rocks loose and dangerous, *arête* narrow, and so forth; in fact, they were easy and safe. It was the great height of the mountain, the impressive surroundings, the deep plunge of the cliff on the Italian side, the novelty of the route—these elements distorted my vision and disturbed my reason. We came back to Zermatt inwardly swelling with pride, nor did that pride have a serious fall till the following winter, when we discovered that the expedition was not new, and that George Prothero, who first made it in 1874, had not thought it of sufficient importance to be put on record.

Nowadays such doubts would scarcely be possible. The guides at Zermatt know all that has been done among their mountains, while easily accessible books of reference correct any misstatements they may make. It was a surprise to me to find how little in 1877 was currently known. Even the names of many of the mountains were doubtful, and still more uncertain those of passes. The Zermatt of the 'seventies was in every way very different from what it afterward became. It was quite a small place. There were only two hotels that counted, the Mont Cervin for tourists

and the Monte Rosa for climbers. Year after year the same group assembled. They were more like a family than a club. A common interest united them. Most were English of one class; the two Seilers were their father and their mother. In fine weather we climbed and in bad weather we played billiards on an unlevel table and talked without end. The traditions of what had been climbed resided in the members of this group like the Common Law in the breast of the judges. Year by year old members dropped off and were replaced by new; thus the group was continuous with the early pioneers. It remembered Hudson, Whymper, Tyndall and the rest as belonging to themselves. The account of Zermatt and its Wall, as given in "Scrambles in the Alps," remained still true. The atmosphere of "Scrambles" lingered on; we regarded the high peaks with a respect now long banished. If one wanted to know whether a climb had been accomplished, one depended upon information obtainable in the Monte Rosa smoking-room. That was the ultimate authority, and it was far from infallible. Contemporary guide-books were not constructed for climbers, but for so-called "pedestrians"—walking-tour people. They described certain ascents which the pedestrian might perhaps attempt, and others he might like to read about, but variations of routes and the wrong ways up peaks did not trouble the compilers. It was a rude shock to discover that my fine new route up Monte Rosa, accepted as such by the Zermatt crowd, had in fact been previously accomplished; nor was this the only instance of a lack of infallibility in my new

and highly revered companions. There proved by degrees to be so many things none of them knew. As long as inquiries were confined to the Cervin, Dent Blanche, Weisshorn, Dom and the like first-rate peaks the facts about them were generally known, but when one asked about the Nadelhorn, or the Arbenjoch, or about routes and mountains on the Italian side of the frontier, one soon reached the limit of obtainable information.

From the beginning I was an inquisitive climber. It was not merely the dozen big mountains around that were interesting; the whole district demanded to be understood. What were the other sides of peaks like? Whither did passes lead? Into what valleys? To what villages? How were glaciers related to one another, and valleys to ranges beyond? Numberless such questions called for answer, not merely from the map, but visually. After a few more climbs of minor importance—the Rimpfischhorn and such like—we set forth to see for ourselves some outlying regions beyond the encircling ranges. Thus we visited the valleys of Zinal, Arolla, Valpelline and Tournanche, and crossed a number of easy snow passes, presenting no climbing difficulties and involving much laborious wading over deep snowfields, but commanding some of the most beautiful snow-scenery in the Alps. Few typically modern climbers could nowadays be hired to make this tour. I found it of entrancing interest, and can still look back upon the days thus spent as golden, not for what they accomplished but for what they revealed. We saw the tremendous north-west face

of the Cervin, which for dignity can hold its own in any mountain company. We passed close under the Dent Blanche and made all sorts of new acquaintances, but most of all we obtained a new vision of the wide and gracefully undulating delicacy of the high snow-fields. I date my love of them from this time. Nothing in Nature is more pure, more tenderly modelled, more dainty than these high *névés*. To cross them in hot midday is a weariness to the flesh, but only then is their full glory displayed. At early morning or by moonlight they also beautifully reveal themselves, but it is under the full blaze of the high sun that they attain the culmination of their splendour.

It was only after some weeks of such technically insignificant expeditions that, greatly daring, we ventured to tackle one of the peaks of repute. The instructed reader will smile when I name it—the Zinal Rothhorn, from the Zermatt side. Starting from the hotel shortly after midnight, we attained the summit with unexpected ease, and were back in the valley again in time for lunch. We had enjoyed every yard of the way, for the Rothhorn is an enjoyable mountain. It is full of variety. There are easy rocks, a snow-slope, a short *arête*, a traverse, a short *couloir*, and then the final rocks, which were considered difficult. A rather dramatic step round a projecting corner, with a truly vertical precipice seen between one's legs at the stride, led to the summit—a comfortable place where you can sit at your ease and behold countless peaks and ranges stretching away on every side.

So easy a victory encouraged us to essay the Cervin itself, though not without some searchings of heart. We used to call it the Matterhorn then and till the other day, but now German names rather stick in our mouths, and the more ancient designation, the Cervin (a corruption of Mons Silvius, I believe), has been adopted by English climbers, as always by our French and Italian colleagues. This time also it did not occur to us to sleep out. We set forth from Zermatt by lantern light about midnight, and I can still remember the emotion with which I trod the silent, cobble-paved street, and how the lantern flashed on the brown chalets and our hobnailed boots clattered on the stones. It was a perfectly fine night. We walked in silence, conscious of the stars and of the rising, uneven mule-path, thrillingly conscious also of that mountain-giant vaguely visible against the sky by the stars it blotted out.

The approach to some famous thing, long desired, is always subjectively impressive. The awaited first vision of the Polar ice-pack, of a tropical forest, the Pyramids, the Acropolis, the Roman Forum, the Taj, excites the mind of the traveller and provides an emotion that can never be repeated. In the case of the Cervin there was superadded to this expectancy a background of unrealised dread. The vague reminiscence of the tragedy over the very site of which we were to pass hung upon the imagination, and was mingled with a dim sense of formless danger caught by mere infection from popular repute. Solid common sense assured us that we were perfectly competent to

carry through what we were undertaking, but it is one of the delights of the dark hours and a semi-somnolent condition that common sense tends to be dethroned and all kinds of superstitions, expectations and unformulated forebodings reign in its stead. Daylight scatters them, but in the hours of night they thrive. The brilliant opal of a climber's day, with all its radiant, many-coloured joys, needs the dark matrix of mysterious night on which to form.

With earliest dawn we were at the foot of the great pyramid and were passing the farthest point of my boyish wanderings. Sight of Whymper's tent-platform, still as fresh and plainly marked as if only last week abandoned, made vivid the recollection of the often-discussed tragedy. I was expecting to strike at once up the long north-east ridge, but obviously that was not the way. We took to snow instead, to the very top edge of the snow-slope that leans against the east face, and followed along the crest of that with our right hands often touching the lowest rocks. After traversing what seemed far across the foot of the rocks we turned sharply to the right and mounted straight up a gully. Hopeful of remembering for record an exact description of the details of the route, I kept saying to myself, "Gully, rib, staircase, rib, traverse, gully," and so forth, but changes followed one another too rapidly, and I soon lost track of details. Nothing near at hand in the least recalled the aspect of this rock-face as seen from a distance until we came to the end of the long oblique strip of snow which so conspicuously divides the rocks like the bend on a

shield. The large unity of the slope, when beheld as a whole, is lost from near at hand in a multitude of details. One mounts amid a chaos of rocks large and small, balanced on ledges or wedged in gullies, the solid mass of the mountain being oftener thus disfigured than nakedly displayed. The climb was surprisingly easy. Only here and there came passages that required care; even the steepest pitches offered little impediment to swift advance. I think the hardest scramble was up a short cliff falling from the platform of the old upper hut.

That was then the only hut on the Zermatt side, a tiny refuge. We arrived there before the party sleeping out had emerged to begin their day's climb, and thus fortunately got ahead of them and were able to make our own pace instead of following theirs. More scrambling of like character took us to the triangular ice-slope that falls from the sharply bending shoulder of the mountain. It was covered with soft snow and delayed us for a few minutes. We made a short halt on the little *arête* that crests it, and then followed along that to its abutment against the final peak. From this point the route in those days struck almost horizontally away over the north face and entirely quitted the east side, which had thus far been followed. Now I believe it adheres to the ridge between the two, which has been made easy by blasted steps and safe by a long series of strong, well fixed ropes. The rocks of the north face proved to be firm and rather smooth. There was always handhold and foothold, but seldom a ledge you could stand on. It

was my first experience of such rocks, and I was duly impressed. They were not really very steep, but gave the impression of steepness, and it was easy to see that if an unroped climber were to slip on them he would inevitably slide to destruction. The slope descended for some distance unchanged, then bent sharply over and disappeared into space. To look up the head had to be bent far back. At the top of the foreshortened incline the summit appeared deceptively near at hand.

After traversing a long stone's throw we turned straight up toward the top, following a slight depression, not sufficiently marked to be called a gully. The way was presently barred by a little cliff which is visible in every photograph as a black band crossing the north face from side to side. It was upon this steep place that the accident happened, though not exactly where we stood. The rope that Whymper fixed to steady the descent of himself and his unnerved guides, when they continued the descent after the loss of their four companions, still dangled over the rocks a short distance away to the right. One could not but glance down, involuntarily picturing the unfortunate victims of the accident as they slid from slope to slope and disappeared over the very edge now full in view. For me it was a point of honour to negotiate this difficult spot without help from guide or chain—the pedantry of inexperience. There were no further rememberable incidents. The slope eased off; snow took the place of rock. We quickly reached the final double-summited ridge and sat down on the peak surrounded by a cloudless panorama.

A few steps below the summit one of us loosened a stone, which crashed down along the route of our ascent, smashing to pieces at every bound. As this stone-fall was happening the party following us came into view near the shoulder and full in the track of the stones, which rattled about them in dangerous proximity. It was their duty to have waited till we were on the top, as no one could prevent loosening a stone now and then, even with greatest care. Nor had we caused them delay, for we had climbed from the shoulder to the top in half an hour, and they were so far behind that a halt of five minutes would have kept them in perfect safety. We awaited for two whole hours their arrival on the top. It was none too long. I have always loved long halts upon peaks and regarded with wonder the men who, having taken infinite pains to reach a certain point, quit it again almost in the moment of arrival.

The guides of the other party arrived on the summit weary, out of temper with their employers, and angry with our guides. They said we had detached the stone on purpose to kill them! When they were safely seated we started down for what proved to be a breathless race. No sooner had we descended a little distance than they began bombarding us with stones, and so continued as long as we were in the line of fire. Never did I pass through a nastier time on a mountain than during this descent, with the stones crashing and rattling about us with little intermission. The remainder of the descent was uneventful but very wearisome. From shoulder down to glacier it is

monotonously uniform, a kind of rotten staircase, steeper in some places than in others, but always the same thing. We hurried as fast as our legs would carry us. Both the mountain and ourselves were in excellent condition, so we made quick progress and were back at the hotel in Zermatt in time for an early cup of afternoon tea. The whole expedition had taken less than twelve hours' actual walking.

An ascent of the Weisshorn was the last big climb of the season, which concluded for me with a failure on Mont Blanc through bad weather, and a fortnight's solitary wandering on such of the glaciers of that range as were accessible from St. Gervais. It was almost an axiom then that no wise man should venture on a glacier alone. Solitary climbing has since been practised by some skilful mountaineers of rather a reckless sort, and great feats have been accomplished. My own experiments were not of a very adventurous character, though I came to realise later that I owed complete safety to luck. I remember negotiating a *bergschrund* by a bridge which from below had every appearance of strength, but which revealed its crazy and instable character from above when it had been safely crossed. Let no reader hold me responsible for recommending the sport of solitary climbing when I say that only to the lonely wanderer does Nature reveal some of her fairest secrets. However acceptable a companion may be, he is a disturbing element in certain moods. Alone amid the high snows a man may abandon himself to the maddest frolic of delight. He may shout and sing and express his joy, and there

will be none to call him mad or put him to shame. Rousseau-like, he may, if he pleases, lard the glacier with his tears. I had no call to weep nor often to shout, but I loved these lonely days high aloft. They were fraught with emotions long grown indistinct, but memory holds them embalmed in a fragrance none the less precious in that it escapes description.

## CHAPTER VII

### MOUNTAIN GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

THE desire of possession marks the first stage of an emotional enthusiasm. What we behold with wonder and delight, with love and adoration, we seek to absorb. We yearn to make it part of ourselves, to become identified with it inseparably. That yearning remains permanent as long as love continues. It does not even diminish when other aspirations are added to it, and may even superficially seem to have replaced it. Affection breeds longing for knowledge. Sight is not enough, nor the mere presence of the thing adored. We want to know, to understand, to embrace the law of its being. So long as love lasts increase of knowledge inflames it, but if the time arrives when such knowledge becomes a mere intellectual pursuit, a thing hunted for its own sake, love dies and all the glory of it vanishes away. Twenty years were to pass before I made this painful discovery.

Thus my pilgrimage of romance reached the stage when the desire for knowledge became absorbing. The easy approaches of ecstatic enthusiasm were passed; the region of serious investigation and study had now to be traversed. The reader must not suppose that romance thereupon became dormant or ceased to inspire. On the contrary, it was still the glamour of the high world that kindled the longing for know-

ledge. Every glorious sight beheld became only the more enthralling when some of the elements composing it were understood. It is, however, difficult in describing this stage of a mountain lover's development to keep sounding the romantic note. Let it be remembered that that deep diapason was not silenced, although other subjects were introduced and embroidered upon it. Romance showed itself very plainly in the superior attraction felt for expeditions not previously accomplished. The consciousness of romance is never more vivid in a man than when he is forcing his way where no human foot has trod. The pioneer generation of climbers enjoyed emotions of the same kind as those experienced by Columbus when first crossing the Atlantic, or Stanley traversing the heart of unknown Africa. The emotion was of briefer duration but of like kind. The great Alpine peaks had with few exceptions been climbed before the 'seventies; not one remained virgin in the Zermatt district. Several, however, had only been climbed from one side, and there were still passes uncrossed. Curiously enough, they included two of the easiest and now most frequently used passes between the valleys of Saas and Zermatt—the Windjoch and the Fee Pass. Both were afterwards traversed by me for the first time! Thus new routes were still discoverable, and the joy of making any of them was the joy of exploration. Thirst for that form of delight was taking root within me and steadily growing. A normal pyramidal mountain, such as the Weisshorn, has three ridges and three faces; it may therefore offer six separate lines

*Photo : Spencer.*

THE FEE GLACIER AT DAWN.

of ascent. Mountains of less regular form, such as Mont Blanc, may offer many more. There remained scope for detailed exploration. If one was to attain the delight of making "new expeditions," the first thing to be done was to find out what had already been accomplished. Experience had shown that no authoritative and exhaustive record of the doings of our predecessors existed, and that no individual knew completely what routes had been climbed and what not. I set to work to replace this ignorance by knowledge.

I began by questioning the Zermatt guides, and received much mutually contradictory information from them. Their testimonial books were examined and supplied some reliable facts. Hotel books, in which visitors used to write their doings at length by way of occupation on wet days, yielded a number of otherwise forgotten or unrecorded expeditions. The casual notes thus assembled were copied into a book on my return to England. During the following winter the search was continued in the libraries of Cambridge University and of the Alpine Club—the latter then housed in some rooms high up in 8 St. Martin's Place, rooms that were solitary and cold except in the evenings of monthly meetings. The published volumes of the "Alpine Journal" were first despoiled. I found them on a recondite shelf in the University Library, and worked steadily through them while sitting perched on steps of a little staircase in a corner still photographed in memory. Nothing concerned me except the Zermatt district, but every re-

corded ascent made in that part of the Pennine Alps was meticulously abstracted in my notebook. The results thus attained were much less complete than the inexperienced researcher imagined, for publications in foreign languages were not consulted till later. They sufficed, however, as basis for absorbing discussions with such other Cambridge undergraduates as had caught the climbing mania, among whom Penhall of Trinity was chief.

The power to describe accurately so complicated a thing as a high mountain climb is not innate in climbers. Experience showed that it is rare. The farther back you go the vaguer are the descriptions. The invention of a clear terminology was a slow process, by no means at that time complete. Moreover, inexperienced writers have a curious habit of writing "east" when they mean "west." No one ever confuses north and south, but they blunder also about right and left. To these simple confusions are added others due to defects of memory and faulty observation. In the end, therefore, my investigations left me with a number of problems as to routes actually taken which could only be solved on the spot or by aid of better maps than then existed. Thus it came to pass that the season was devoted partly to clearing up some of these topographical problems, and partly to important expeditions which were certainly new. Among the latter were to be included the Rothhorn up the west face, the Dom from the Domjoch, and the Cervin by the Stockje *arête*. Penhall agreed to join forces with Scriven and me. The party thus con-

stituted, with Ferdinand Imseng as leading guide, duly met at Gruben in the Turtmanthal on the last day of July, 1878.

It was not a lucky season. The weather was bad. Our proposed route up the Cervin was never approachable. Penhall and Imseng accomplished it in 1879 on the same day as Mummery. Worst of all for me was an accident which might have had serious consequences, the only accident I have ever suffered on mountains. Like most alpine accidents, it was the result of folly, in this case unusually egregious. We were intending to cross the Colle delle Loccie, and had passed the Petriolo Alp. The snow proved to be in very bad condition. As the final slope of the col is liable to be avalanchy, the guides declared that the expedition must be abandoned for the day, and that we must await the night's frost. We had many hours, therefore, to waste at the Petriolo Alp, and spent them in scrambling up the huge fallen rocks that there lie about. All of us were on the flat top of one of these rocks, which was as big as a house. We lit a fire on it, and that cheerful humorist, Frans Andermatten, went to sleep. The smoke drifted in his face and awoke him. He seized the burning rhododendrons and threw them at us. I was standing close to the edge of the rock, and thoughtlessly jumped back into space and a clear fall of some thirty feet. The last I remember is fatuously trying to look as though that was what I intended to do. Even after so short a fall I did not know when I hit the ground. Unconsciousness preceded the sense of shock. The results were

not serious. I fell upon an island of grass a little larger than myself, and I happened to have my coat at the moment tied in a thick roll round my waist. I also struck the ground all along, head, back and heels together. It was, however, a week before I could climb again, thus missing some precious expeditions.

If the Cervin withheld itself, the west face of the Rothhorn and the Domjoch *arête* of the Dom were more obliging; we successfully accomplished both scrambles. Neither would now be called difficult, though the prestige of their novelty again imposed upon me, and I thought them harder than they were. Imagination has always coloured, illuminated, or clouded for me the plain realities of mountains. Perhaps that is why I have so loved them. Of the Rothhorn scramble there is little to say except that it led through scenes of memorable beauty. It was a two-day undertaking. On the first we crossed the Triftjoch to the Mountet hut; on the second we returned to Zermatt over the peak. I remember being enchanted by the loveliness of the little snow-field on the east side of the pass. It lies in a recondite hollow between encircling buttresses and slopes of the Wellenkuppe and Rothhorn. Once within it you have a delightful sense of seclusion. The world of men is utterly shut away. Not even a cattle-alp is visible. Yet there is no effect of wildness or horror about this solitude, at all events in fine weather. It was felt to be a protecting fortress, not an enclosing prison. Its supreme charm is due to the graceful modelling of the snow-floor, undulating as beautifully as a tropical ocean asleep after storm,

"quiet as a nun breathless with adoration." The play of light upon its spotless surface was indescribably tender. To tread upon that faultless floor seemed a profanation. The clattering staircase of rotten rocks on the other side of the pass, by emphatic contrast, enforced the impression of delicacy left by this home of mountain fairies.

The Dom ascent was far more dramatic. The guides hurried us off mysteriously one wet afternoon. They had news of another party meditating the same expedition, and were eager to be first. We slept in reasonable comfort beneath an overhanging rock by the moraine of the Kien glacier. The sky was heavy with cloud, and the prospects for the morrow as unfavourable as could be. At two o'clock, in pitchy darkness, we set forth toward the unknown, seeing naught but the flashing of the lanterns and hearing only the sighing of the wind. An hour later we trod the glacier and mounted it by a great zigzag across and back, sweeping first far to the right to turn an ice-fall, then back to the left to the foot of the wall of rock upholding the pass. It was bitterly cold and our surroundings intensely solemn, or, according to one's mood, gloomy. We found shelter for breakfast in the bowels of the great *bergschrund*, and ate a cold meal surrounded by huge icicles. Then came the wall, still, I believe, reputed difficult. The rocks were certainly the hardest I had up till then tackled. By gullies and crests we worked upward, the wind howling on the ridge overhead and tearing the clouds over it like grey fleeces through a mighty comb. Presently

snow came pricking down in little hail-like pellets, tick, tick, ticking upon the rocks. Two and a half hours of this work brought us to the *arête* some distance above the pass. The blasts of the gale came intermittently. When they fell on us it was like the impact of a solid thing. Often the air whirled and whistled around in scurrying vortices. The ridge is narrow and the plunges on either hand are terrific; the rocks were very insecure. The gale made it necessary to keep as much as possible down on the lee side, and there the going was more difficult than it would have been along the crest. Once so strongly did the wind smite the ridge as to blow right off into space a loose rock the size of a man's head which had been balanced upon it. A pitch of smooth slabs was the most difficult obstacle. There were no handholds whatever. We made a ladder of ourselves, one upon another, and the last man hooked his axe over the top edge and hauled the others up. The ascent of the ridge occupied almost four hours of strenuous exertion. When we were least expecting it, lo! we were on the summit.

The vision everywhere lost itself in cloud at a range of but a few yards. There was nothing to pause for. As the last man stood on the top the leader had already begun descending toward the north. This side is a great snow-slope, limited on the left by the north-west ridge. At first we went straight down, then bore to the left and kept on or near the ridge, which preserved us from wandering out of a direct course. Not far below the summit the leader disappeared, but without straining the rope. Snow closed like water

over his head, yet he was not in a crevasse. Such was the state of mental numbness to which we had been reduced by hours of the blustering and banging of the gale that no one seemed in the least surprised by this somewhat remarkable occurrence. Penhall, who was second on the rope, stood still and waggled it in his hand as though he had some peculiar fish on a line. No one said anything. Presently the leader emerged on all fours, as white as a miller, and we proceeded on our downward way, giving a wide berth to the spot of disappearance. That evening I asked Imseng what had happened; he could remember nothing definite, except that he had crawled about on hands and knees under a load of soft snow and found himself again in the open air. After about three hours of careful descent we suddenly came below the cloud-roof, which stretched away level as a ceiling, obliterating every feature above it. The glacier was presently quitted without further incident, and there only intervened between us and Randa the endless zigzags of the cattle-path.

The experiences of the season of 1878 had two effects. They confirmed and enlarged my interest in mountain topography and history, and they emphasised the attraction of "New Expeditions." Thenceforward I cared only for such climbs as were in the nature of exploration, either as traversing ground for the first time, or as revealing the structure of mountain districts which could not be comprehended without personal investigation on the spot. The following year was mainly spent upon researches in Continental libraries in respect of subjects with which this book is not concerned.

It is only germane to notice that the same process which was applied to the collection and co-ordination of facts connected with a certain category of works of art and their historical development could be applied with little change to the collection and ordering of facts connected with the structure of mountains and the history of mountaineering. The two researches, apparently so different in aim, could be and were carried on simultaneously; they acted and reacted on one another.

Obscurities in descriptions of several ascents were cleared up by inspection of the ground during weeks spent at and about Zermatt in the summer of 1880. When I returned home my notes were in a sufficiently advanced condition to warrant publication. The little volume called "The Zermatt Pocket-book" was thus prepared for the press. It was while correcting the proofs that I came into epistolary communication with the Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and, from 1882, editor of the *Alpine Journal*. His knowledge of the Alps as a whole was far more extensive than mine. His alpine library, now doubtless the finest existing in private possession, was even then remarkable. He was good enough to offer me his help, and it proved invaluable. I had worked through extant literature and records in the English, French and German languages. He added the Italian and gave the whole project his blessing. Thus began for me a close personal relation which has lasted unbroken down to the present day. We have done much work together, in which I have always been

the receiving, he the giving partner, my indebtedness to him thus steadily accumulating from year to year.

"The Zermatt Pocket-book" issued obscurely from the press in the early weeks of 1881, and, of course, made no kind of stir even in the small coterie of climbers. No one, and least of all myself, could have imagined how prolific an offspring was destined to descend from it. Scores of "Climbers' Guides" have since been issued to all sorts of mountain groups in various parts of the world. Almost every one of them derives its arrangement lineally from "The Zermatt Pocket-book." The little parent volume has long been out of print, and is almost impossible of present-day acquisition. Few can realise the amount of work that went to its production. Not alone had the dozens of volumes in various languages to be carefully examined, but the writer had actually to walk over a great deal of ground. Published accounts might give accurate description of the route followed up a particular mountain, but they would seldom describe the footpaths of approach. It was necessary to walk up almost every valley-path that led to a glacier before a brief description of it could be made that would serve to guide a new-comer on his way. To obtain information about the lower slopes was harder than about the heights. Often a confused description of a climb above the snow-level could be interpreted by a telescopic examination of the mountain from a suitable point of view, but the paths up sequestered valleys and over cattle-alps, with their many branchings and their apparent inconsequence, easily lead the wanderer

astray, and it is only by personal examination and notes written on the spot that accurate directions can be provided.

No sooner was the Pocket-book in the hands of climbers and in actual use than its deficiencies became apparent. I heard little from those who found themselves correctly guided, but was deluged with complaints from less fortunate individuals who had been insufficiently or wrongly directed. A list of obscurities requiring elucidation thus rapidly formed and grew. Scarcely was the ink dry on the first edition than materials were collecting for another. Thus the season of 1881, like its predecessors, was almost necessarily devoted in the main to clearing up points of difficulty, sometimes by traversing the ground, at others by climbing to observation posts from which details were clearly visible. My companion for the first part of the summer was my Cambridge friend, Robert Parker, now deservedly remembered with honour as the late Lord Parker of Waddington. We began the season by a guideless exploration from Stalden of the glaciers covering the north face of the Balfrin and over a new pass adjacent thereto—the Balfrinjoch. It commanded a comprehensive view of the Nadelgrat, a ridge then practically unknown to climbers, though since much frequented. A later expedition revealed the secrets of the Nadelgrat's north face, when we gave to the various peaks the names by which they are now well known. Our arrival at Zermatt and the publication of the Pocket-book was celebrated at a supper given by the Seilers and the drinking of much Bouvier.

Another peak, named and thus presented with an independent existence this summer, was the Wellenkuppe. It had been in full view of every frequenter of Zermatt, yet it was neglected. Lord Francis Douglas, indeed, was known to have climbed it, searching for a way up the Gabelhorn, but by what route or whether even from Zermatt or Zinal, was not remembered or recorded. Around Zermatt there existed a sufficiency of known points of view easily accessible to walkers who did not care to adventure into the regions of snow—the Gorner Grat, the Ober Rothhorn, the Hörnli, the Mettelhorn—but of easy snow-peaks compassable in a single day the supply was small. The Breithorn is easy enough, but rather long if climbed from Zermatt. The Untergabelhorn, though interesting, is advertised by its name as second-rate, and looks second-rate whencesoever beheld. The Wellenkuppe seemed likely to be just what was wanted, but as long as it had no name and was regarded as a mere outlyer of the Obergabelhorn, no one was moved to climb it. For bolder spirits it was too small, for beginners too reputeless. One day we set forth to see what it was like, and climbed it by its east face from the Trift valley. The scramble proved to be entertaining, varied, and easy enough to be safely undertaken as a first expedition by any active novice. Planted on the culminating rock-platform is a high pyramid of snow surmounted by a huge cornice, which from afar looks like a breaking wave. I was curious to behold it near at hand and pleased to stand upon it. We named the mountain from this wave,

and the name has caught on. The local guides were delighted with the addition of a pleasant expedition to their resources. It rapidly became popular, and so continues, I believe, to the present day.

September opened with a great storm. Snow fell in unusual quantities to a low level. The aspect of the green hills about Zermatt became wintry. Avalanches rolled across the mule-track below the Riffel Hotel. A week or more must intervene before the high mountains could return to a climbable state. This was the first revelation to me of what the Alps might be like in winter, a time of year scarcely then sampled by travellers. The number of winter ascents so far accomplished by English climbers might be counted on the fingers of two hands. Few guides have much power of description. They told us often enough of their winter lives, how they spent much time cutting wood in the forests and bringing it down to the villages, how they kept their cattle indoors, and how the days often hung heavily on their hands. An intelligent and inquisitive person who spends summer after summer among an interesting folk in friendly intercourse with them will desire to understand their way of life. The circumstances of their surroundings make it widely different from that of dwellers in the plains. With the progress and regress of the seasons, mountain-dwelling people must change the level at which they live and work. Cattle and goats are their livelihood, and have to be fed in the depths of the valleys in winter and on the highest attainable grass in midsummer. Hay for winter-feed

has to be saved at every level and carried down. Cheese has to be made daily wherever the beasts may be pasturing. Centuries of experience have gone to building up the traditions which now dictate the work of Alpine peasants in every month of the year. Similar traditions rule wherever like conditions obtain. Increasing familiarity with the people and their habits impresses the observer with a sense of the antiquity of the life he sees the peasants pursuing in the valleys of the Alps. Each generation does from month to month much the same work as its countless predecessors.

I had been a climber through many seasons before coming to realise this antiquity of Alpine life. Inquiry brought to light much published record of the history of the peasant communities into whose midst we came for a few weeks in summer to live our own lives of sport which barely touched theirs, only affecting them as bringing to their villages a market for their milk and a new occupation for their adventurous young men. I believe it was during the days of storm this September that I happened upon a little printed pedigree-book of the Zermatt families, and discovered that the Taugwalders, the Bieners, and all the rest of them (our porters, muleteers and guides) belonged to families which had been settled about Zermatt as far back as the thirteenth century. It also appeared that the constitution of the Commune still preserved features then impressed upon it, and that the names of fields and alps were of like antiquity. Ancient treaties between village and village, regulating the

supply of water by mountain-canals and its distribution hour by hour to every man's property, were found to be still in accepted and successful operation. The whole landscape of the grazed alps took on a new significance. Small torrents of water captured from a glacier stream, led by skilful engineering across hillsides, and finally discharged by countless little rivulets upon every yard of the grass-land, were found to be of hoary antiquity, and the ridged surface of the ground to be due to centuries of deposition of fine glacier-mud in the beds of the little channels or at the points of their final discharge. As understanding of these matters increased, the visible landscape of the region immediately below the snow-line and down to the valley-floors took on a new significance. Its picturesqueness became involved in a tangle of human memories, accumulated activities, monumental accomplishments of successive bygone generations. But by however much this region was thus humanised, by just so much was the aloofness of the abode of snow increased. The Cervin attained a new dignity from its age-long association with the dwellers at its foot, who had one and all regarded it and the heights, its neighbours, as part of that other world which was the home of ghosts and mysterious powers. Folk-lore and local history thus added themselves as desirable subjects of study to the plain topographical, geographical, glaciological, botanical and other scientific inquiries which had been the occupation of my previous seasons spent in the Alps.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LOVE AND DEATH

THE Alps as a playground had ceased to be all-satisfying by the time now reached in this chronicle. Year by year their attraction had become of a more literary and less gymnastic character. Their beauty was keenlier enjoyed, but it was perceived to be all-pervading, not confined to the highest levels. Days among the snows were as delightful as ever, but they were enriched by alternation with periods of valley wandering and visits to the level of the middle passes. Once or twice I had descended from the crest of the high range into the depths of Italian valleys, where the chestnuts grow. Their exuberance, their laughing waters crystal clear, their luxurious aspect after the austerity of the Swiss valleys attracted me with ever-increasing power. The sight of the Italian plain beheld from such peaks as the Strahlhorn or Monte Rosa was a strong magnet. Why I resisted, year after year, this draught toward Italy I cannot now remember, but I held grimly to love of the art schools of the north, of Van Eyck and Dürer, and of the northern slopes and valleys of the Alps as summer playground. In 1882 my resistance gave way, and a new chapter of life opened with Italy for its central feature.

On one thing I was determined. I would not

enter Italy through a tunnel by train. It was early spring-time. Here was a chance of seeing somewhat of winter effects in the Alps. Brieg was the first halting-place, and a day was given to visit the Belalp —an over-vaunted point of view, as it turned out. The deserted hotel and Tyndall's Chalet were deep in snow. Not a soul was met during the last hour of the ascent. It was a wearisome excursion. Next day I walked over the Simplon, temporarily closed to wheeled traffic by avalanches falling all over the place. The warmth of spring had come with a sudden burst and all the hill-sides were loud with the sound of its coming. The details of the way are forgotten, but I well remember having to climb over a wall-sided avalanche at rest barring the road. Much higher up, on turning a corner, there came into view a cirque, or bay, in the hills round which the road curved. Roadmen stopped me at this point and made me stand and watch. I had not long to wait. Avalanche after avalanche, all of them small, fell across the road round the cirque, now at one point, now at another. I forget how many scores of them were counted falling within an hour or two. At last they stopped, the supply apparently exhausted. I was then able to proceed, and reached the summit in safety.

The descent was uneventful till low down, almost at the chestnut level. For some time a great rumbling had been audible ahead. It grew louder as I approached, and waxed to a thunderous roar. A bend in the road revealed the cause. It was an avalanche of a kind I had never before beheld. Some

great incurving hollow in the heights, some wide, steep valley-head, was discharging its entire winter accumulation of snow at one catastrophe. The slopes converged to a gully, a cataract track in summer-time. Down this the snow was pouring in a continuous stream, leaping over steep pitches like waterfalls, crawling serpent-wise down narrow gullies, incessantly renewed from above as a fluid pouring out of a reservoir. It came to rest on the floor of the main valley, bridging the torrent and piling itself into a great cone about the exit from its parent gully. Long I stood watching it from the road which traversed the opposite hill-side. It had been falling before I came in sight of it; it was still pouring forth its apparently exhaustless supply when I passed beyond hearing. Such are the great spring avalanches which annually debouch at definite well-known spots and mark for the inhabitants the opening of the season. When summer is far advanced the black remainder of them, smothered in dirt, can still be traced by the observant traveller, who little imagines the grandeur of their hour of descent nor the enormous size of their piled-up volume when first come to rest. The warm depths to which they descend cause them to melt rapidly. Were it otherwise, they would outlast a summer and originate glaciers.

Thus the violence of the Alps was left behind. Long stretches of open, gently sloping valley followed, and then Maggiore, on to whose bright surface I had so often gazed from far aloft as on a sea of glass from the walls of heaven. There they all were—Baveno,

Stresa, Isola Bella, Pallanza beyond—all the places with the well-known names that sound in the ear like music. It was not like entering a foreign land, but rather as though at last coming home. Thus some son of an Arab parent born in the far north might feel when brought in view of the clean desert where all his forefathers had ranged. Nothing was unexpected. The painters had told truth, but the reality was more entrancing than any pictures. So Italy burst upon me. Months of hard work followed, mostly spent in Florence—Italian to learn, every picture, sculpture and building to be seen, notes to be written and re-written, all the art-histories to be read. It was a time of incessant labour from early morning till midnight. When the cup of acquisition was for the time filled and assimilation ceased, the Alps again called imperatively.

After a day or two spent at the Lakes in their midsummer exuberance, I was back at Macugnaga, with the great wall of Monte Rosa challenging from aloft. No one knows the Alps who approaches them only from the north. On one arriving from Italy their snowy grandeur falls with the stimulating effect of contrast. The hour of arrival was brilliantly clear. The Belvedere view revealed every *couloir* and rib of the vast rampart from the Nordend on the left, round to Monte Moro on the right. The old passion of investigation revived, and a desire to disentangle all the muddled story of the passes over the ridge—Weissthor, Old Weissthor, Mattmark-Weissthor, and the rest. Tradition pointed here and there to the site

of ancient pilgrimage-passages. Early climbers also had crossed, and no one rightly knew the ways they had followed. I spent a day or two examining the ground, cross-questioning local authorities, trying to make sense of the records. Everything ultimately fell into place save the crest above one recondite glacier in a hollow corner at the foot of the Jägerhorn spur of Monte Rosa, about which information was lacking. A wall of rocks furrowed by a long *couloir* rose to the skyline. It was almost a repetition of the Fuorcla Prievlusa in the Engadine. I decided to reach Zermatt by this passage with Louis Zurbriggen as my companion. We named it the Fillar Pass.

A brilliant morning found us making our way round the end of the Macugnaga glacier, over the Fillar Alp, and so approaching the foot of the wide Castelfranco gully or rocky bay which branches out above into all those *couloirs* and rock-ribs that provide routes for one or another of the many so-called Old Weissthors. None of them is really an old pass, but at that time it was supposed that one of them might be. After crossing below the foot of the Castelfranco glacier, and walking steadily uphill for an hour or two, we came to the next bay in the great mountain wall, the last that leans up against the mass of Monte Rosa itself. The glacier within this hollow is known as the Fillar. It is broken across by an ice-fall which was easily turned by the rocks of its left bank. The sloping snowfield spread before us as we sat on these rocks, and the remainder of our way was clear. We had only to tramp up the snow and climb the wall

above it. An inviting *couloir* carried out its promise to afford us ready access to the pass overhead. Sometimes we climbed in it, sometimes on the steep but easy rocks by its side.* The day was glorious, the view over the Italian lakes and foot-hills spread wider each time we turned round. The crags of the great mountain on our left jutted aloft like the buttresses of a cathedral nave. The strenuous exertion, the vivifying air, the untamed natural surroundings, the wide expanse of earth displayed, enveloped mind and body in a stimulating embrace after months of Italian luxury and warmth. Though well remembered, all yet seemed new; the glory of the world enraptured the reawakened soul.

Other climbs followed — mostly repetitions of scrambles made before. If novelty provides an overwhelming charm, and no one felt that more than I did, there is also a peculiar delight in revisiting scenes already well known and repeating under fresh circumstances of weather and condition expeditions that have been more than once enjoyed. Thus I made my third ascent of the Rothhorn, this time in company with a clergyman friend of many years. Arrived on the summit, he stood up, took off his hat, and loudly sang the Doxology, calling upon me to join in lustily. The astonished echoes added their voices and kept the chorus going after we were through. The puzzled guides looked on in silence.

* Professor Garwood, who climbed it some years later, criticised me for not warning climbers against this pass. He found the wall a-clatter with falling stones and the *couloir* an avalanche track. When we crossed it was on its good behaviour.

Late in July word came that a friend of ours had been killed while attempting the ascent of one of Mont Blanc's Italian outliers. Walter Leaf and I set forth at eleven o'clock that night, and reached the St. Théodule at sunrise—a sunrise which flooded the Graians with glory. I thought of Blake's reply: "What! when the sun rises do you not see a disc of fire, somewhat like a guinea?" "Oh, no, no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty'!" We tramped on down the valley to Chatillon (eleven hours' walking from Zermatt), and, driving thence, reached Courmayeur at midnight. Next morning we met the body of our friend as it was carried in, a very different meeting from that which he and I had planned in England a few weeks before. We buried his guide and performed such other ministrations as were possible.

Mont Blanc in splendour now bore a strangely new aspect. I make no attempt to depict the deep emotion of those days. This only let me say: If Love is a great revealer, even so is Death. The staggered mind is receptive to visions not otherwise revealed. The great mountains did not seem inimical, as the Cervin used to seem. No! They put on an aspect of higher dignity. They withdrew themselves again into that other world to which years ago they had seemed to belong. The old emotions returned with novel force, infinitely enriched. There was no longer question of regarding peaks as problems, as things to be climbed. They stood forth in majestic brilliance

as a white wall between the kingdoms of life and death.

I took a guide one day and climbed toward the site of the accident. The way led me past the still clearly-marked sleeping places both of my friend and of another party which had perished on the cliffs beyond. The climb was not easy, and I was far from light-hearted. Never before, or since, have the high regions borne for me the aspect they wore that day. My men left me alone on a high crest, gazing across the deep-lying glacier at the fatal spot. A pall of noontide glory enveloped the mountain. Hours passed in dream. The shining hollow of the snows seemed a-hum with ghosts like swarming bees, yet infinitely peaceful. As an echo on soft music came the lines:

> O fear not thou, whate'er befall
> Thy transient individual breath;
> Behold, thou knowest not at all
> What kind of thing is Death:
> And here indeed might Death be fair,
> If Death be dying into air,
> If souls evanished mix with thee,
> Illumined heaven, eternal sea.

It was two years before the desire to climb reawakened. Let no one suppose that during this interval the power and charm of mountains was in abeyance for me. At no time were they more potent, more keenly and consciously felt. Now I approached the enjoyment of them in communion of heart, not ashamed to outpour the feelings they quickened. Sympathy awakened expression and shared

a common joy. Fate, Providence if you will, provided the needed atmosphere. Long months in Italy had been spent with a party of friends, who became, and remained for life, the dearest of all friends. For once "the time and the place and the loved ones" were all together. The beginning was among the hill-towns of Umbria, the ripening through long weeks at Venice. In that company Art took a new significance, and the exploration of its treasures became not a mere study of technical achievement, but a progressive revelation of Divine power manifested in human handiwork.

Reader, if you and I are to be real comrades, we must share the same adventures of fancy and of soul. You must see my whales and elephants in the clouds, and must leap to the same god-given revelation, whether in art or nature. My fairies must be thy fairies, and my gods thy gods. Hand in hand we must thrill with a single rapture—"le cœur en fleur et l'âme en flamme." Shared emotion is the source and fountain of art. What is a work of art but an incorporated emotion in flight from soul to soul? I have written above of the charm of solitude in the heart of the mountains, but visions of beauty die unless they are shared. Beauty perceived in common is the fertile union of souls. Therein life culminates and bursts into blossom. The fruit may not ripen for years, but at such moments it sets.

All works of art that appeal to us have begun as visions of beauty imaginatively beheld by inspired seers. All are not for each of us. To some revelations

we are congenitally blind, but no one is blind to all. The artist beholds, in Nature it may be, an effect of beauty. He casts it by his magic on canvas, or gives it permanent form in some other material, or writes it down in music or in words. He does so partly because the creative impulse drives him, partly because only thus can he share it with others—not all others, but some; here and there one only it may be, but the expected fellow-soul is partner in the work. The reader is presumed by the writer, the percipient by the painter or musician. Were it not so no work of art would be made. Now the world is full of things that artists have fashioned and poets sung. They each and all await accepted entry into other hearts. It is for us to absorb this heritage. No millionaire can do so by right of purchase any more than a landlord owns the landscape by any legal right of possession. Those only possess a work of art who can behold in it the artist's vision. The sensitiveness demanded is the birthright of a few, but it can be cultivated by all. Mutual sympathy is the key that unlocks the treasure. What one sees Love can help another to find.

It is the same with Nature. To own the landscape you must comprehend its beauty. The beauty of Nature is multiform. One can find one sort of beauty in it, another another, and Love can transfer the emotion. Artists can render such perceived effects in paint, poets in verse. The mass of mankind has to learn from artists and poets what to see in Nature. The beauty of sunsets has become more evident since Turner painted them. We of to-day

have been taught by our forefathers to perceive the refined loveliness of English domestic landscape. Kent, the garden of England, no longer needs interpreters. Its villages, its fields and copses, its hills and Wealden plain, are by all admired. Three centuries ago it was not so. This was the best that Michael Drayton could think of for praise:

> O famous Kent,
> What county hath this isle that can compare with thee?
> That hath within thyself as much as thou can'st wish:
> Thy rabbits, venison, fruits, thy sorts of fowl and fish;
> As with what strength comforts, thy hay, thy corn, thy wood,
> Nor anything doth want that anywhere is good.

The most banal of journalists now knows more than that, not by his own discovery, but by heritage of the eyes and hearts of the seers of beauty that have gone before him since Drayton's day.

Two years, whose passing needs no description, were enriched for me by a new power of sight fostered by sympathy. Thus even the æsthetically blind may be made to see and the dim eyes endowed with clearer vision. We spent weeks at Cortina and among the Dolomites. I was not tempted to climb one of them, but delighted in their beauty none the less. Limestone in my opinion is, after volcanic rock, the nastiest to climb, but it is famous material for a fine mountain architecture. Who that has seen Cristallo or the Drei Zinnen will deny it? Among these peaks exciting scrambles are famous. I have adventured none of them, yet the Dolomites to me

are not a whit less memorable or less well remembered for their beauty than the mountains I have climbed. From Cortina we drove across Tirol and Switzerland, spending happy days here and there *en route*. Pontresina was revisited, and the glaciers. They generated no mountaineering impulse. The snows had withdrawn themselves aloft like clouds that only children hope to rest on. When the delight of the eye could be shared only at low levels, the high places were robbed of their attraction. The sympathetic appreciation of beauties beheld in common was an educative power which sealed its impress permanently during those two Sabbatical years.

## CHAPTER IX

### PENNINE AND LEPONTINE WANDERINGS

IN the summer of 1884 we travelled through post-haste from New York to Turin, meaning to make a home in Venice. Behind us, on entering Italy, fell the bars of a cholera-quarantine, and we were locked in. A few weeks at Orta, then up to Alagna, and above it to the simple inn on the Colle d'Olen—it was a magical transformation. I had several times looked down upon the Italian plain from high peaks and passes, a vision hoped for on lucky days but relatively seldom beheld. Now our windows commanded such a view, and scarcely a day passed in which it was not displayed for an hour or so; sometimes all day long. A lake, the plain, and in it the long bright line that is Milan and the marble Duomo in the midst, sometimes dancing and trembling in the heat, sometimes sleeping in amethystine air, or like a level sea in the moonlight, but never twice the same. Had there been any moderately level ground on which to walk, the summer might have passed in contemplative repose. But there was no flat ground. The snow began a few yards away. Outliers of Monte Rosa were close on one side, little rock peaks on the other. Their proximity and the desire for movement soon led me aloft. These scrambles were all races against time; I was generally back in time for breakfast, and always

for lunch. Thus I climbed all the southern peaks of Monte Rosa. Some of the earliest mountain explorers had adventured in this region of the snows and recorded their doings. It used to be entertaining to follow in their footsteps and try to see things as they had seen them with eyes of wonder.

In the eighteenth century, and perhaps long before, there was a tradition at Gressoney that a lost valley lay hidden in the heart of the Monte Rosa mountains. It was fabled to be an earthly paradise, carpeted with richest meadows, watered by clearest streams, shadowed by fruitful trees, but cut off on every side by impassable glaciers. Accordingly in the year 1778 (the story is told by De Saussure) seven men, led by Niklaus Vincent (whose name is now borne by the Vincent Pyramide), started away from Gressoney and ascended all the length of the Lys glacier to the Lysjoch. They climbed to the top of a little peak of rock on the col, and, looking abroad toward the unknown valley of Zermatt, they cried aloud that the tale they had been told was true, and the Lost Valley was found. They called the place the Rock of Discovery (*Entdeckungsfels*). I thought that I would like to follow in their steps and see what they saw. We found and climbed the rock. The view that smote upon our eyes was memorable. There was a lowering sky above; a shaggy glacier below. Between them stretched along all the line of great mountains from the Dent Blanche to the Mischabelhörner. The Lyskamm, with its bold *arête* end-on, shut us in on the left. Full in front

rose the Höchste Spitze of Monte Rosa, and round to the right the other summits in their order. The green slopes about Zermatt lay like an emerald set in silver.

Five or six weeks on the heights sufficed. We returned to Alagna, and spent a day or two at Varallo, a beautiful pilgrimage resort since affectionately remembered by lovers of Samuel Butler. I had visited it before, arriving from Orta after a wonderful walk. We had left that village in the night, and rowed across the silent lake and close under the Isola San Giulio, from which, I am told, that ancient saint drove away the snakes, as did St. Patrick from Ireland. Then we had walked in moon- and twilight up the fertile and wooded slopes of a valley to the Colle della Colma, at its head, where the dawn broke, and we were greeted by the far-off crest of Monte Rosa aflame with crimson fire. The descent to Varallo was through another luxuriant valley. It brought us to the hotel in time for breakfast. The little expedition is one of the loveliest among these Italian foot-hills, and thus is Varallo best approached. The arrival from north or south by the main valley is comparatively prosaic, but the place itself, with its paintings and its chapels, enclosing terra-cotta sculptured groups, is full of the spirit of romance for those whose hearts unfold in such an atmosphere.

The summer of 1884 had taken me back to the snows and renewed the happiness of wandering on the heights, but it had loosened the hold of Zermatt upon me. Though we returned thither more than

once, it thenceforward ceased to be the pivot of my climbing. Parts of three seasons were devoted to the Lepontine Alps, which had first attracted me when seen from the Belalp and afterward were found to demand examination from the editors of the "Climbers' Guides," for by this time the Zermatt Pocket-book's family of offspring was dimly foreshadowed. When the original little half-crown volume, having gone out of print, was eagerly purchased for a guinea second-hand, it became obvious that something better of the kind was called for, so I went to work to provide it. The exploration of the Lepontines was accordingly taken in hand, with Coolidge as my climbing companion. The expeditions we made together, in so far as they were new, have been published, and are not worth recapitulation in this place. One was the first recorded ascent of Cherbadung, about which I remember nothing except that the morning of that day was so wet that we remained in bed and came down late for breakfast. The weather then changed, and we started off at the unorthodox hour of 10.30 A.M. and successfully accomplished our climb. Returning to the hotel, we met a Swiss party which, by careful research, had discovered the virginity of this obscure peak, and come to climb it just a day too late. They had to use the engraving of it prepared for their own intended story to illustrate the account of our scramble. It really was rather hard lines.

On Monte Leone Coolidge and I had our nearest approach to a quarrel. We had reached the Kaltenwasser Pass, and were breakfasting on it. The old-

fashioned route thence took an immense detour over soft snowfields, but it was clear that nothing would prevent a direct ascent from the Col to the peak. Not only was the route shorter and less laborious, but it was new, and I still adored any kind of new route. Nothing, however, would budge Coolidge. He was going to follow the old way, *in primis* because it was old and had been taken by certain early climbers in whose exploits he was interested; secondly, because that was the route we had started out to climb; thirdly, because the other route was new, and he was fed up with new routes. Being a person of a naturally obliging disposition, I gave way, and we floundered for hours over the softest of soft snow, not reaching the summit till three o'clock in the afternoon, all "sunburnt and sorrowful."

A second visit to Binn made in the following year (1887) was for the purpose of passing over the Ofenhorn and visiting the region beyond. Our previous visit and something we may have written about the little village had given it a passing vogue, and the hotel was full all the season. The landlord, who had formerly described himself to me as "rich in children and debts," was revelling in unexpected prosperity, of which he regarded me as the author. When, therefore, I demanded a cold chicken to be included in my climbing provisions, he declared that though he had none in the larder, one should be forthcoming, even if he had to steal it—and forthcoming it was next morning. The weather was evil and our local guide ignorant. This time Coolidge was not with me.

We blundered up the Ofenhorn, and sat down at a high elevation to lunch. The bird was produced. Knives slid off it. Axes rebounded from it. The breast could only be peeled off in muscular cords. The legs defied us. I gave hold of one to the guide, and grasped the other. We pulled, and they opened out straight to east and west, but would not give way. When we let go, they folded up again as though they had been trussed. We heaved the thing over the rocks. It bounded off like a football from ledge to ledge, finally disappearing in one wide parabola into the mist quite undamaged!

The parts to the south and east of the Ofenhorn are as wild and unfrequented as any areas in the Alps. We wandered over them in fog, and only by good luck found the Lebendun Lake. Heavy rain added to our discomfort. At long last we gained the Tosa Falls just before night. No waterfall in the Alps is more beautiful—a bridal veil over ledged rocks. A gale was blowing all next day, and the water waved and leapt about in wildest confusion. We had intended to climb the Basodine on the day following, but, though the sky was clear, a hurricane was blowing from the north, and we had much ado to get ourselves over the easy Bocchetta di Val Maggia. Once in the shelter of the valley all trouble was at an end, and hours of sheer delight followed. I doubt whether there exists in the whole world a valley more beautiful from end to end than this. One descends from terrace to terrace, and each is more lovely than the last. From each hangs a waterfall,

*Photo: Spencer.*

CROZZON DI TOSA, FROM ROAD NEAR MADONNA DI CAMPIGLIO.

and others pour in from side valleys. There is music of rushing water everywhere—not the booming roar of a great glacier river, but the gentler murmur of many waters, which do not unite into a considerable torrent till the lower levels are reached. The waters are crystal-clear, with flowery margins. The path goes sometimes along the bank, sometimes far above it. At every turn a new vista of beauty opens. The grass seemed greener, the sky bluer, the flowers brighter than I could remember. Every hour the vegetation became more luxuriant. The cottages were endowed with an Italian grace which no Swiss chalet can rival; they were perched on the loveliest shelves as though best to see and to be seen, or gathered into hamlets or villages perfectly grouped about charming churches. Intoxicated with beauty, we arrived at Bignasco, prettiest village of all, with an inn at that time admirably kept. In the hall of it was a marble basin, and therein trout swimming. The landlord handed me a little net and bade me choose which I pleased. When we had washed our hands it was served for my lunch perfectly cooked.

Another year (1890) Coolidge and I were again in the Lepontines. We started from Berisal, on the Simplon road, and climbed the Wasenhorn. One of the densest of fogs enveloped us on the summit, making it impossible to reconnoitre a route down the Italian side. We just had to blunder through as fortune might dictate, the route in any case being new, and all of us entirely ignorant of the locality. We struck down the steep but easy rocks of the

south-east face, and so zigzag by ribs and gullies, which shouldered us into a snow *couloir* with the red rocks of the south *arête* on one hand and the black rocks of the south-east buttress on the other. The *couloir* was long and steep, and we cut and trod our way down it ignorant of whither it might lead. An extraordinary silence reigned, punctuated at rare intervals by the clatter of a falling stone—a scaring sound when it is overhead and the fog hides the course of the missile. Then snow fell heavily. In three hours we came to the *bergschrund*, and an hour later were at the little inn on the Veglia Alp, soaked to the skin.

Day and night for three days it snowed above and rained below, so that nothing of the remembered charm of the place was visible. The Veglia Alp is one of those beauty-spots on the southern side of the watershed which tourists do not visit and are never likely to spoil. The tendency of modern transport conditions is to nail down the tourist crowd to definite changeless tracks. Faster and faster the human torrent flows, and more and more deeply does it become committed to its own gullies. The area it ruins with its foul irrigation becomes wider spread, the network of its channels grows more elaborate, but where the channels have not been cut the flood does not extend. Veglia will never be on the line of a tourist route. Its beauties are not staggering enough to strike the insensitive into wonder, but they are none the less of rare quality. The great extension of the high grazing ground makes an obvious appeal; it spreads abroad within a huge amphitheatre, not as flat meadowland

spreads, but undulating and broken by many valleys. There are old grass-grown moraines and others covered with trees. There are also little lakes. This green expanse is embattled about by rugged mountains and lofty snowfields, from Monte Leone through all the Lepontine peaks. The tiny hostelry, half chalet, half inn, is planted in the midst of this fair encirclement. The air is always full of the clang or tinkle of cow-bells, near or remote; herds that seem countless graze in scattered multitude.

For three days all this was blotted out. Coolidge and I remained indoors and spent our time writing the substance of the "Climbers' Guide" to the Lepontine Alps, to be published the year after the corresponding Pennine Guides, which replaced (1890-91) the Zermatt Pocket-book. In the afternoon of the fourth day the weather cleared, and a white world was revealed. All the grassland was deep in snow of a brilliancy fairly blinding. We seized the occasion to climb the Pizzo Valgrande di Valle, of which I remember nothing, not even the glorious view recorded in my journal. Next day the storm returned and drove us back from the Ritter Pass, which we might have crossed if we had not lost our way in fog and mistaken a notch in a side-ridge for the gap on the summit crest. When we came below the clouds it was too late to correct our blunder. The day was the last of August, and there seemed little hope of any early change for the better. The storm continuing, all the cattle-folk started downhill next morning, driving their hungry beasts before them. They had

been unable to graze for the best part of a week, and were calling aloud for food. In me also arose a desperate desire for more humane surroundings, and even Coolidge had had snow enough to last him for a spell, so we made our way to Pallanza and across to Laveno, whence at evening we beheld in perfect clearness the great peaks, Monte Rosa, the Mischabel, and the Fletschhörner. All of them were red in the dawn next day.

That was for me a day of frolic, when, with the paraphernalia of guides and equipment suitable for high climbing, we scrambled up by the Sasso di Ferro, over other hills to Monte Nudo, and down the far side to Luino. Coolidge, though at first scornful of such trifles, presently dilated with joy at the thought that this might be a track Freshfield had never followed! Nothing could be more glorious than the scenery on every side at every hour. In the distance we could see the Maritime Alps, the Viso, Monte Rosa, the Saas Grat, the Lepontines, with the Finsteraarhorn peeping over; but these were a mere background to the wide expanse of Italian plain and always the glorious lake at our feet. No one knows the beauty of the Lakes who has not looked down upon them. Their margin and their surface are happy places enough for a day or two, but it is to the high-planted spectator that they display the perfection of their charms. That was the day's great discovery; since then I have made it a practice to linger, not beside, but above lakes and rivers. Let the reader take the hint; he will not be unthankful.

## CHAPTER X

### HIGH-LEVEL ROUTES

MODERN mountaineers who have had patience to read thus far will long ago have concluded that the kind of climbing herein described is not at all their sort. There has been little enough of the thrilling adventure for which they seek : none of their giddy cliffs and microscopic handholds, no cracks meandering up vertical walls of rock and leading to knife-edged slabs, no pitches blocked by overhanging boulders which have to be swarmed over, no going aside to discover barely practicable lines of ascent for sport's sake in overcoming Nature's challenge. Let them not, however, suppose that prompting to such adventure never moved me. I heard tell, like all the rest of us, about the joys of the Chamonix Aiguilles, and was for a time kindled with the wish to experience them. This was the prompting that took me to Chamonix in 1890; I intended to experiment on the Aiguille du Géant, and settled down among the strenuous company assembled at the Montanvers.

Man proposes, but weather disposes. From the moment of arrival intermittent snowstorms visited the hills, and more expeditions were made by us down to the flesh-pots of Chamonix than up to the splintered crags of the Aiguilles. The Aiguille du Tacul was the only accomplishment of the first week. After a

promising night, Broome and I set forth for the Géant. We spent two hours and a half wandering in cloud and snow, wind and thunder, on the snow-field near its foot before we found the hut on the col. Egregious weather drove us back to our base round by way of the Col de la Seigne. Freshfield was spending the summer in one of the finely-situated chalets on the Col de Voza, where I met him, and for lack of better employment we settled to climb Mont Blanc together. To that end we slept at the Grands Mulets, meeting Charles Edward Mathews on his way down from—was it the sixteenth of his ascents of that mountain? As the sun was lowering behind the Lake of Geneva the western sky was barred by narrow layers of cloud with crimson spaces between. When the sun shone through these it richly dyed the snows on which we stood. When it passed behind the bars the snows were blanched. Thus the high landscape alternately blushed and paled and blushed again, and only to those high-standing as we were was the cause apparent.

Let no one suppose because the ascent of Mont Blanc by the ordinary route is easy that it is lacking in magnificence. It is, in fact, splendid throughout. Few more gorgeous snow-scenes are displayed anywhere in Europe than that which surrounds a climber who has gained the Grand Plateau. We enjoyed it in tolerable peace, but as we rose to the Vallot hut near the Bosse the cold became intense, and so strong a wind was blowing that the *arête* could not be traversed. The gale dropped after we had lingered an hour or

*Photo: Spencer.*

AIGUILLE DU GÉANT, FROM THE PÉRIADES GLACIER.

more in the hut, where the thermometer registered I forget how many degrees below zero (Fahrenheit), though the door was shut and the interior crowded with men. There was no view from the summit this time, but that is a matter of least account in the case of Mont Blanc, whose glory is in the detailed snow and ice scenery all the way up and down, not in the great expanse of lower mountains, hills, and plains visible from the top.

It was probably good luck that rendered unattackable the fine rock-peaks I had come to essay. Patience gave out, and I prepared to set forth on a different kind of adventure. Had the fates otherwise decreed, I might have been shinning up difficult rocks on obscure mountains from that day till this. The experiences of the next few days otherwise determined. After a farewell scramble with Mathews on the Aiguille d'Argentière and a final day of storm at the Montanvers, I started away from the hotel with a party of friends to make what proved to be a new High-Level Route to Zermatt. I felt like a boy escaped from school as the famous "Centre" was left behind and we were off on our travels, intending to move on from day to day instead of constantly returning to our starting-point. Our beginning was mild enough, as befitted the wretched condition of the heights. We crossed the Mont Blanc range by the low Champex Pass. There is a lake on the top. The sun was shining when we reached it, and the air was deliciously fresh. Waters plashing against the shore threw up glittering diamonds in their gaiety. A

joyous mood possessed all of us. I have never seen Champex since, but when the memory of it recurs it is of a place not merely beautiful but, as it were, permanently endowed with happiness. It would be foolish to risk marring that by going there again. Would it not be wise never to revisit the sites of joy?

The Vélan was the next hurdle in our steeplechase, and we surmounted it in an easy stride by the normal route. The view is one of the finest panoramas in the Alps, and we beheld it in perfection: Geneva's lake, the ranges of Mont Blanc, the Graians, the Tarentaise, and all the rest, the splendid Combin near at hand. Novelty began with the descent, made by the south-east face, which is furrowed by long *couloirs*. We struck down rocks beside the central snow-filled gully, and presently took to one of the *couloirs* and went down it to a grassy, chamois-haunted mound at its foot. I am never happier than in a *couloir*, if stones will abstain from bombarding me. When not too steep, *couloirs* form the loveliest highways for descent in fine weather. Whatever a *couloir's* gradient, it always produces the effect of steepness. One feels like going down a ladder of indefinite length. With one's back to the mountain, a wall of rock on either hand, the snow-strip leading down between to some *névé* basin or glacier, spreading out below as foreground to the floor of a view away and away over foothills to remote ranges and plains, the eye and the fancy are continually entertained. Moreover, every step leads so evidently down in the desired direction. There is no doubt as to the route. Prob-

ably the leader has to cut quantities of steps, so that the rest (and I never desired to be anywhere but among the rest) have plenty of time to look about and enjoy the scenery. There is generally a glissade to end up with, and then a long halt for food at the bottom of the great ladder, which is so fine to look back at from below.

By walking and driving we reached Aosta, and spent the next morning there among mediæval buildings and Roman remains, rejoining our guides in the afternoon where we had left them, at Valpelline, and walking up with them to the By Alp for the night. By is not of such rare beauty and extent as the Alp of Veglia, but it is good enough. The huts are beside a large flat meadow, the bed of an old lake, which grows luxuriant grass. A storm noisily visited the place during the night, but passed clear away after raging for a few hours. Next morning we divided into two parties, and each traversed a new pass (the Col de Luisettes and the Col Vert), besides climbing for the first time the Aiguille de Luisettes. They were easy enough, if I rightly remember. We reunited at the Col du Sonadon, and slept at Chermontane, after a delightful day. An imposing thunderstorm again possessed the night and ushered in an evil-looking day. Its looks, however, belied it. Rain, having failed to delay our starting, cleared off, and brilliant weather replaced it as we were mounting the wide and very gently sloping Otemma glacier. Of all the glaciers known to me in the Alps this most nearly resembles a typical Arctic glacier. Its width, its

slight incline, the apparent fewness of crevasses, the relative lowness of the white hills about it, are the Arctic features, about which I shall have more to say hereafter. Arrived on the upper basin, we mistook the col we ought to have crossed, for the various cols hereabout are rather featureless depressions between mounds easily to be confused one with another. I think we ultimately crossed three successive cols over the main and side ridges. It is not worth while setting forth details; they were all recorded at the time. Ultimately we again blundered into a steep snow *couloir*, which could not have been descended except in an avalanche if the snow had not been in excellent condition. By glacier, moraine, and the usual succession of features we reached Prarayé, and there spent the night. The pass we had crossed appeared to be a new invention.

We had now got into the swing of our stride and felt the delight of movement. We were not merely climbing, but journeying. The descent each afternoon was as novel as the morning's ascent. What was beheld ahead one day was traversed the next. The known was always being left behind, the unknown disclosed. It was like life. I felt that I could swing along thus for ever. There was no more talk of stopping at Prarayé than anywhere else; Prarayé invites no one to stay. Next morning, therefore, in spite of threatening weather, we were off and away. The great ridge which from the Cervin thrusts south, rising first to the peak of the Dent d'Hérens, continues on as Les Grandes Murailles. It bristles with

small rock summits, but its distinguishing feature is the long buttressed cliff which forms its east face toward the Val Tournanche. On the west it is easy of approach from the Valpelline glacier, but the other face offers many a difficult problem for the rock-climber. We gained the crest of this ridge at a point never before crossed—the Col de Créton. A steep rock-chimney led us into yet another snow *couloir*, longer and steeper than its predecessors. It is the longest *couloir* I ever descended. An hour from the top we came to an overhanging rock close on our left, just in time to shelter under it from a wild thunder-storm. The guides made a bundle of our hissing axes and carried them a few yards away, fearful that they would attract the lightning. After the storm the weather cleared, and down we went, sometimes on snow, sometimes on rocks. Where the snow ended a waterfall leapt forth from a cavern beneath it. The vertical cliff drove us to traverse to the left over shelves of grass between little precipices. We never knew whether we should not find ourselves altogether cut off, but there was always a way out, twice over water-falls. At last we debouched on a great debris slope, and our difficulties were at an end. We spent the night in Breuil's hospitable inn, where I for the first time met the now so well-known mountain explorer, Filippo de' Filippi.

A commonplace crossing of the St. Théodule brought this little journey to its end at Zermatt. Next day I joined Coolidge at St. Niklaus for the purpose of exploring with him the peaks and cols in

the neighbourhood of the Barrhorn, which at the time were practically unknown. The Swiss Dufour map of this region was then pure fiction and bore no relation whatever to Nature. The walk was laborious, owing to the great height of grass and rock slopes that had to be surmounted from the low-lying village to reach the snow level. We accomplished what we set out to do by climbing an apparently virgin peak, which now on the present accurate Siegfried map is duly named Stellihorn and correctly planned. Three wet days intervened, during which we transferred ourselves to Berisal, and thence made the Lepontine expedition already described, followed by a hill-wandering among the Italian Lakes.

Thus the whole season, after Chamonix had been abandoned, was one of movement from place to place by high-level routes. I never again desired to settle down at some climbing centre and make radiating expeditions thence and back. "To give room for wandering is it that the world was made so wide," said Goethe. Travel had always delighted me; now the combination of mountain climbing with continual moving on proved to be the form of mountaineering that gave the richest return. Henceforward I desired nothing better. Wandering has a romance of its own which the stationary holiday-maker ignores. It is a continuous leaving of old things behind and affronting new situations. It is a passing from the known to the unknown. It opens wide the door of opportunity. It invites revelation. It stimulates expectancy. It repeatedly presents known features in new forms and

combinations. For the wanderer the end of the day is as novel as the beginning. His human encounters are most varied. He may meet a brother soul on the road or an instinctive enemy. He must part from either at latest by next day. A fleeting moment of pleasant companionship must be caught on the wing. A lovely prospect must be fixed in the memory at one seeing. It will never be beheld again. There arises a consciousness of momentum. It becomes easier to proceed than to stop. An enforced halt for more than a day is painful. On and on one must go. It is like life. I date my passion for exploring remote mountain ranges from this summer journey.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CALL OF THE EAST

THE desire to travel far afield was almost innate in me. It had been fostered and directed by long months spent in Egypt, Syria, Cyprus, Greece, Constantinople, and Algiers in 1888 and 1889. Then it was that I first "heard the East a-calling." I have heard it ever since. I hear it now. The dark-haired, long-headed Mediterranean race which in the dawn of mankind wandered up to these islands has many a representative living in the mixed population now called English. We have been submerged under conquering Celts, Goidelic and Brythonic, conquering Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, Normans and so forth. We have been mixed with Flemings, Huguenots and Jews; but in every generation some of us hark back to the deepest stratum of our local ancestry, and in the hearts of those who so revert there lies an instinctive love of the warmth and richness of the north African lands from which they draw the fundamental elements in their nature. To such the East makes strongest appeal. In the cold north they feel that they are essentially strangers in a strange land. Not till they come into a sun-illumined desert do they really find themselves. There at last they are at home.

Somewhat thus did I feel on first entering Egypt. The land and the people were acceptable from the

beginning. As months passed on the Nile and in the neighbouring deserts the spirit of the East became absorbed. It is a wonderful thing this spirit of the East. From the dawn of history it has been breathed upon the Western world, and all of civilisation we possess is the result of that influence. The greatest achievements of European mankind have arisen from the marriage of East and West. This generated the Art and Philosophy of the Greeks, the architecture and decoration of Byzantium, the cathedrals, churches and castles of mediæval Europe, our heraldry, and even chivalry itself. The spirit of the East shed light upon the West, and received in return from it law, order and obscurantism. We give to the Orient votes, science, machines, drains, police, inoculations, unimaginative honesty, education based upon reading and writing, and an art founded on drawing from the nude. Wherever European influence extends decorative Oriental art dies. The true life of the East is based upon handicraft, not upon words. The root of its organisation is the family and the village community, not voted representation. The East was civilised thousands of years before the West emerged from barbarism. The sign of Civilisation is Manners. In the Oriental world of sunshine, colour and romance good manners have penetrated to levels of society which in the West remain barbarian. Beggar and prince can be, because in fact they are, social equals. It is a world of movement and of wide horizons. Every laden camel that passed through the streets of Cairo till recently might have brought his burden

from Samarkand and be on his way to Morocco or Timbuctoo. Any merchant, till recently, peddling his wares in a cubby-hole in the Muski might the year before have been trading in Fez, the year before that in Tashkend. There was a sense of spaces and distances about Oriental life till the West invaded it.

Much of the old East had vanished before I saw it, but much still remained that has vanished since. I found it wonderful to be in the midst of a people not ashamed to acknowledge God by publicly praying wherever they happened to be at the hour of prayer and performing their devotions in those monumental attitudes wherewith Islam has endowed the world. It was a new thing to behold a people who wore drapery for clothes and stood out against the light like monumental statues—men and women whose movements were as free as those of a young colt, and who knew nothing of the corporeal stiffness of the European. The setting in which these people live was as delightful to me as they were. In the sun-illumined dust their moving figures seemed like phantoms wandering from afar. I loved the cleanliness of the desert, the enveloping glory of the sunshine. I can still smell the faint odour that drifts in violet smoke across the fields at sundown from every village at the hour of the evening meal. I loved the shouting of the men in the street. I loved what I could learn of their language and the poetry of their everyday speech. The Arabian Nights became credible. I was as much in the world of romance as ever in boyhood.

As then I had longed for the Alps, so now, returned to England, I longed yet more passionately to go back to the East, to go farther East than before, to "somewhere East of Suez." This desire, coupled with experience of the joys of mountain-travel as far greater than those of mere climbing, bred the wish to undertake a journey of exploration in the mountains of Asia. A definite plan was slow in forming, but gradually it took shape. Others, I found, possessed similar ambitions. The first idea was that Freshfield, Mummery, and I should join forces. I find a note in my diary for April 13th, 1891, that we three had a meeting at the Royal Geographical Society on that day, and agreed to come together at Darjeeling on the 10th of the following September for the purpose of attempting the ascent of Kinchinjanga. A month later Freshfield had to abandon the plan for private reasons, but Mummery and I held on, though postponing the date and changing the venue to the other end of the Himalayan range, substituting the great "K. 2" for Kinchinjanga as the goal of our ambition.

The best form of equipment for mountain-travel was investigated and reported on by a sub-committee of the Alpine Club. I took lessons in surveying, etc., from the Geographical Society's teachers. Preparations and studies went forward during the whole of the year 1891. In the summer Mummery and I agreed to make some experimental climbs together, and to meet for the purpose in the Graians. I think there must have been some talk of Harold Topham joining

our Asiatic party. He had conducted exploration in Alaska. At all events, he met me in the Alps, and so did Ellis Carr and some others. We had a preliminary run in the Valtournanche district—Topham, Williams, and I—in bad weather. All went wrong, and we were ever in fog and storm. Things culminated one day somewhere near the Vofrède glacier. I forget what peak we were trying to climb, but whatever it was we gave it up in disgust. It suddenly occurred to Williams that if he turned down at once he would just be able to cross the St. Théodule that evening and catch the last train down the newly opened railway from Zermatt to Visp, which would enable him to reach Liverpool in time for a certain boat sailing for New York. Off he went in great haste. Topham accompanied him to the valley. I descended to Breuil, and there met Edward Fitzgerald, who a few years later explored the New Zealand Alps and the Andes of Aconcagua. After other scrambles our party met at Aosta and crossed Mont Emilius to Cogne, whence we climbed the usual peaks—Grivola, Herbetet, Tour de St. Pierre, Grand Paradis—expeditions elsewhere often described.

Mummery had been an acquaintance of many years. He was well worth knowing. He stands out among climbers as a mountain genius. There existed between him and any mountain an instinctive understanding. He knew mountains as some men know horses. He seemed born to climb them, though physically he had not the aspect of an athlete. His body was light and slender. He suffered from some weakness of the spine,

which disabled him from weight-carrying but did not otherwise impede him. His limbs were long, and the extremities extraordinarily sensitive and serviceable. He was like a spider on steep rocks, to which he seemed to adhere by magic. He was tall, and could outreach most men of his height. It was enough for him to have support with a toe on some almost invisible inequality and an extended finger or two at arm's length over some little crack or ledge; thus he would worm himself upward. He had great muscular strength in arms and legs, and little weight of body for them to raise. He knew by instinct or long experience whether his points of adhesion were sufficient for momentary safety. I doubt if he ever slipped. He always had complete confidence. Nothing flurried or hurried him. He could endure any amount of cold, and would sit out a night in the open at any level. He would stay in bitter frost waiting where he happened to be till dawn enabled him to proceed. Arrived on a summit at any hour of the afternoon, he would adventure a descent by an untried route with the certainty of being benighted. He grasped the character of a whole group of mountains as things to be climbed after a couple of days' experience. Routes new or old were nothing to him. He took his own way, and was as capable of leading as the best of guides. He was full of ingenuities in inventing light equipment, and was not imposed upon by tradition. Thus he introduced the use of a very thin rope of excellent quality which most climbers thought unorthodox. Climbing was what he enjoyed, not exploring. He cared nothing

about the geography of mountains, and was bored by surveying and photographing instruments. It was the sheer joy of difficult scrambling that possessed him. If he was going to the Himalayas it was to find bigger and harder mountains than the Alps provided. The more I knew of him the more I liked him, and the more evident it became that his attitude toward mountains was fundamentally different from mine. The plan I had by now elaborated was for a mountain journey through the unexplored region of great peaks and glaciers in the far north of Kashmir. I wanted to cover as much ground as possible and to find out what the whole district was like. I intended to take an artist along, and to bring back such a sketch-survey as circumstances permitted, to make scientific collections also, and to engage in all the scientific investigations which could be pursued under the circumstances. Mummery would not have been happy in such a party. He wanted all the time to be given to finding a few big mountains and climbing them. With mutual respect we dissolved our proposed partnership, and decided rightly. On my return from the East he came to congratulate me, and said: "If I had been with you, you would not have accomplished half as much." I think it was true. Never was there a more generous man nor one freer from cant. I have failed in this attempt to characterise him if I have not left on the reader the impression that he was unusually intelligent and gifted. Though he was a climber of genius, he was not a mere climber. He was full of interest in interesting things. He was intellectually

rather than æsthetically well endowed. His mind was philosophical and at home in the abstract. Problems of political economy were specially attractive to him. He approached such questions with the same freedom from prejudice, the same original unfettered freshness of mind, with which he approached a mountain. He was not concerned with old routes and trodden ways, intellectual or material. He would always find his own way, and progress along it by his own powers. Though taking reasonable precautions, he loved danger for its own sake, and would willingly accept a margin of unavoidable risk. Thus it was that when he went to the Himalayas he lost his life on Nanga Parbat. He took a risk of avalanches which in the mountains he knew would have been small, but in Asia, where avalanches fall at least fifty times oftener than in the Alps, was almost certain to end in catastrophe. The finest climber of his or any preceding generation thus gave up his life on one of the most magnificent mountains in the world. It was the death of all others he would have chosen.

The remaining months of the year 1891 were entirely devoted to the organisation of my expedition, purchase and packing of stores and equipment, studies at the Geographical Society and in the Natural History Museum, and the like activities. The days were well filled. The most important requisite, a first-rate guide, was happily obtained in Mattias Zurbriggen, of Macuguaga, who is now recently deceased. He was a man of much intelligence, clever with his hands at almost every craft, an excellent climber, a born

adventurer. Oscar Eckenstein joined us to help with the equipment and on the mountain-side. He did not come with me beyond Nagar. Lieut.-Colonel Lloyd Dickin and J. H. Roudebush likewise came along for the first part of the journey, the former intending to stop somewhere and shoot ibex. The latter, who had no particular intentions, was a perfect joy to us all as long as he could be persuaded to stay, and made himself very useful in getting things going; but he was not a climber. When we took to the snows he returned to the flesh-pots of Kashmir. Our great good fortune enlisted Roudebush's friend, A. D. McCormick, as artist of the expedition. The excellence of his work in black and white was manifested in the published record of the expedition. His water-colour drawings, many of which I still possess, are even more remarkable, and when exhibited earned for him a well-merited reputation. My crowning luck was when I obtained the adhesion of Lieutenant (now Brigadier-General) the Hon. C. G. Bruce, of the 5th Gurkhas. He came to England with one of his men, and they spent a week or two in November at Zermatt climbing with Zurbriggen. They were the first who ever used putties for gaiters in the Alps. Zurbriggen afterwards introduced them among guides, and climbers followed our example. In India four Gurkhas were attached to our party. Our success in covering as much ground as we did was largely due to Bruce's knowledge of the country and to the ability of the Gurkhas in managing the coolies.

# CHAPTER XII

## KASHMIR

WE sailed from London on February 6, and were back on December 20, 1892. The full story of our expedition was published in my book, "Climbing and Exploration in the Karakoram Himalayas." I do not propose to re-tell it here as a tale of adventure, but only to refer to such experiences as have a subjective interest and nurtured that romantic ideal the pursuit of which is the subject of the present volume. Alpine summers had for a dozen years or more so taken their normal place in the annual rotation of my doings that they had ceased to surprise or reveal. Ecstasy had vanished from them. Pleasure survived, but it was of a mild and expected character. My tour in the Near East had opened a new window into the Kingdom of Romance, and I was dazzled with the vision. We grazed Egypt again on our voyage, and touched the outskirts of Arabia at Aden, one of the most romantic ports in the world. It is like a town in the crater of a volcano. Fantastic rocks embattle it. Tunnels unite its quarters. Wild-looking Arabs fresh from the desert throng its ways. Downpouring sunlight floods it as with fire.

The dead-calm sea, when we sailed out into the Indian Ocean, was shot with a more brilliant phosphorescence than I have elsewhere beheld. The bows

of the steamer, cleaving the water, carried on either side swans' wings of bright green light, and the spreading waves were crested with it, drifting like smoke down their backs. Now and again some shark or other great fish, darting away, made lightnings in his wake. The sea was inky black, but the light from the water brilliant enough to pale our faces.

The railroad journey of two days from Karachi to Lahor was full of interest and delight—many sights beheld, few comprehended. It was at Lahor that we first really felt India. The impression then received was abiding and is fresh in memory to-day. It was the time of the Holi festival, and the town was thronged with folk in carmine-stained garments and turbans of all colours of the rainbow. Strips of pink and blue cotton waved overhead in the streets. Dust caught the sunlight. The crowd was quiet in its movements, almost silent. Faces were grave, melancholic, yet there was brilliant colour everywhere and thronging life. Where Egypt is black and white, India is red and blue and green. I visited mosques, tombs, and castle-like forts. They were infused with antiquity. The signs of ancient civilisation were everywhere displayed. The people evidently belonged to an ancient race. Countless generations were implied in the living. The narrow streets were bordered with houses irregularly planted, planned in picturesque disorder, and often crazy in beautiful decay. Poverty in such surroundings was not sordid nor wealth aggressive. The tombs of princes were often neglected, the houses of the poor well enough

cared for. The whole effect left upon my mind was like that of a tangled skein of many-coloured silks. All was pageant—people, streets, mosques, palaces, tombs. No one and nothing beheld belonged to my world, or to an ugly world. All floated in a romantic atmosphere in which the impossible might become true and from which the normal was banished.

At Abbottabad, where we spent upwards of a fortnight, our stores and equipment were re-packed into loads, when they had at last been delivered by goods train. We were hospitably entertained in a typical Anglo-Indian community, and we made expeditions into the surrounding hills, which resembled those about the Italian Lakes, but lacked the water. At the end of March we took to the road, and so in due course entered Kashmir and boated up the Jhelam to Srinagar. Nowadays the journey is swiftly accomplished by motor. It took us four days of rough travel in *ekkas* by road and two by boat. Had we travelled faster Kashmir would have burst upon us; by our slow progression it was gradually disclosed. The way lay along rough roads over high hills, then down into a rugged valley and along the side of the gorge till it opened out into the great basin of Kashmir. That was once a hill-surrounded lake, like Geneva's, only the hills are bigger, high enough to be snow-mountains if they stood in the latitude of the Alps. Two small lakes are now all that remain of the ancient sheet of water. We embarked on one of them and ascended the river to the other, the Dal Lake, which lies just beyond the city. We also made

an expedition farther up still to see Martand and other ruined temples, monuments of old days when Buddhism prevailed in the land. Thus the key-note of Kashmir to me was water—the river and the lakes. We lived on house-boats. Srinagar was a great town of wooden houses fronting on either bank of the Jhelam. They looked, and in many cases were, old. A quarter of the town was burnt later in the year, soon after the cholera epidemic which decimated the crowded population. We felt no presage of this impending doom. All was gay for us in the spring-time. The river fronts of the city resembled Venice translated into wood, fancifully, even fantastically, treated; but some of the buildings, notably the Hammadan Mosque, are dignified and built according to a fine tradition. All over the lands north of Kashmir, away up to Central Asia, the same type of wooden architecture for mosques prevails. It is a type more ancient than Persepolis. The builders of Darius and Xerxes derived from it the forms of the Achæmenian Palaces. The charm of Kashmir, however, is not in its buildings, but in its waters and its gardens. There is a gaiety in the air unknown in the pathetic plains of India. The roofs of the houses and even the graveyards were sheets of blossoming iris. The land is everywhere fertile and well-watered. Peasants were intensively cultivating their little fields. There was life on all hands. Countless villages are dotted about, shaded by splendid chinar trees. Long processions of huge poplars line the bank near the city.

The Dal Lake is the heart of Kashmir. Happy

indeed were the days we spent upon it. Its surface for us was always calm, whether we were upon it or looking down on it from the temple-crowned hill just outside the city—a view-point central to the vale and commanding the whole panorama of its battlemented mountain-walls, with the river winding in seven great silver loops across the green plain, and the city and lake map-spread immediately at one's feet. On the lake itself are little floating gardens, like carpets, and to its margin there stretch, down gentle slopes, the fine formal gardens of the great Mogul. They are built in terraces. Each terrace bears some charming pavilion, or is formally planted with trees and divided by water. Water flows and races through every garden, leaping into sunlit crystal patterns as it runs over ribbed marble slabs, or plashing into marble basins, or running in wall-sided channels. The pavilions look down upon the lake across gardened foregrounds. They look, as they in fact once were, fit settings for song and dance and poetry. Here Nur-Mahal charmed back her royal lover with the magic of her voice. Love has nowhere fashioned for itself a more perfect setting, and we were there in serene April weather among a galaxy of flowers. The time and the place were all that could be wished, but alas! the loved ones were far away! Well ahead of the climbing season, we had no need to hasten when each day was more beautiful than the last, but after a fortnight we had been luxurious long enough. One evening in bright moonlight we floated down-stream through the magical city and out into the sleeping

vale beyond. Our backs were soon turned to the last of the plains, and the strenuous days of the mountain journey began.

The first pass was easy and low. It was followed by a few marches along pleasant valleys over rough mule-tracks, long since replaced by an excellent motoring road. Thus we came to the foot of the Burzil Pass (13,500 feet), by which the first of the higher parallel ranges, the true Himalaya, must be crossed. You can drive over that also now, but we had to fight our way over it in deep snow and a raging storm. From the plains of India to those of Central Asia the wide intervening tract is ridged and furrowed by parallel ranges and valleys, one beyond another. Rivers, notably the Indus, have cut across these by deep gorges, and some kind of path has generally been fashioned along them, but it often happens that a range can be more easily crossed at some point by a pass than by the gorge. To lead our long caravan of coolies in safety over the deep snow and through the dense fog was no easy task. Snow had been falling heavily for days. Avalanches were tumbling, and larger ones were to be expected. We had been kept stationary for the best part of a week awaiting a chance to force the pass. The way led up a twisting white trough, enveloped in fog. Every step was toilsome. The laden men tried to bolt, or cast themselves on the ground refusing to move. It was a dreary solitude. Every year many lives used to be lost on this route for lack of refuges. To-day it is safe enough. It was past noon before we gained the

summit, black night when at length we reached a miserable hut within which the wearied coolies could shelter. Our tents were pitched on the roof. Everywhere else was mud and slushy snow. A more tiring day I never passed, and it was of necessity foodless. We had to be pushing on all the time. In another hour we must have lost some men from sheer fatigue. Many suffered from snow-blindness. Thus we entered a side-valley of the Indus, and in a few more days reached Astor.

The rain that falls north of the plains of India comes from the south-west. As the damp air meets the hills it is precipitated upon them. Thus the north-eastward moving flood of air becomes dried to successively higher levels as it passes over successively higher ridges. By the time it has been carried beyond the main Himalayan range (which we had just crossed) it is dried up to a great height. Thenceforward only the highest snow-peaks reach up far enough to cause further precipitation, which falls in snow upon them and them alone. North of the Burzil Pass rain falls in rapidly decreasing amounts into the valleys. Thus every day's march now took us through a region of diminishing fertility. At Astor the wild vegetation is sparse and hardy; fields to produce crops must be irrigated. A march or two beyond Astor the valleys become deserts of sand, stones, and rock, where nothing grows that is not watered by a running stream, natural or artificial.

The river of the Astor valley joins the Indus through a deep gorge, along which no path runs. I

know not by what route the new high-road has been engineered. In our time one had to climb over a shoulder 10,000 feet high, whence a rapid descent led down to the main valley. This shoulder is called the Hatu Pir. The view from it, to one coming into the world of the great mountains for the first time, was an overwhelming revelation. It would be easy here to quote the description written on the spot, but I am now concerned with subjective emotions as memory holds them, not with objective facts. The Hatu Pir was one of the culminating stations in my Pilgrimage of Romance. There, as in Egypt, as at Lahor, a new world of wonder was opened for me. I looked in at the gate through which the onward way was to lead, and the sight beheld was astounding and glorious. The desert and the mountains I already loved were here united, and on a scale visibly stupendous. Thus far the mountains we had passed had been seen with eyes that did not comprehend their scale, but here the enormity of things was unmistakable. If Nanga Parbat be thought of as a giant kneeling in prayer, with head on the ground, my platform was upon his heel and the great mass of him rose behind me. Turning round to the left I could look into the Indus gorge of Chilas, the deepest cañon in the world, 24,000 feet in depth from the crest of Nanga Parbat to the river-bank, one steep, unbroken incline of snow and rock. Not this way, however, was the eye caught and riveted, but straight ahead northward, where the Indus valley came toward me end-on. It was like looking lengthways into the empty hold of a tre-

mendous ship. Below was the flat desert with the Indus' mighty torrent looking from here like a little rill, cutting through the floor. Gigantic cliffs rose on one hand, buttress beyond buttress of sloping rock on the other. Miles and miles away the valley bent out of sight and great mountains closed it. Two tiny patches of irrigated green demonstrated the barrenness of all else. It was an overwhelming view, and I had come upon it suddenly round a corner. The world has seemed to me a more majestic place ever since. Moreover, this was no landscape of the moon, but one long associated with man. The track we had been following is of extreme antiquity. It must have been traversed by ancient invaders coming down from the north time after time, by Buddhist pilgrims, by followers of Islam with faces set toward Mecca, by merchants and travellers from earliest days. This they also had beheld. In wonder and reverence I drank in the vision. Of all the sights beheld in Asia this comes back oftenest to me and remains most vivid.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SPRINGTIME AMONG THE HIMALAYAS

THE following months were to be spent in the desert region now entered, excepting when we were camping at high levels near the snow-line. There short grass, dwarf rhododendrons, and other Alpine vegetation are encountered. Such were the upper reaches of the Bagrot valley near Gilgit, to the exploration of which we devoted the month of May, too early a season for serious climbing at very high levels. It was a pleasant interlude and the scenery was fine but needs no description here. The desert valleys cannot be so briefly dismissed. If the first vision of them was imposing, they became more impressive the better they were known. Where there is an oasis of irrigated fields there is likewise a village. Sometimes the oases follow in quick succession. Generally some miles separate them. The path is often carried along the face of precipices or very steep slopes. It climbs over shoulders, then plunges to the torrent's edge. Beyond Gilgit it was not practicable for horses, which can only be taken into the fastnesses of the hills in winter when the streambeds are almost dry. Late spring and early summer are the dramatic season. The sun's heat strikes down into the shadeless depths with fiery force and generates such air temperatures as 110° Fahrenheit by day. The rivers are in flood. Snow is melting aloft with

great rapidity. Avalanches are falling, avalanches of snow, and, more wonderful to watch, great avalanches of mud and rock which are discharged from gully after gully, each enormous. One such, roughly measured, would have filled Trafalgar Square level to the top of the roof of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and thousands of them were discharged about the same time over the desert mountain-area of Central Asia. The thing emerged from a wall-sided narrow gorge and debouched into the main valley. It came pulsating in rushes and pauses. The sight was appalling. Huge rocks, cottage-like in size, were carried down in its slimy mass like corks. It bulged and twisted in its gully and roared mightily. On every hillside stones were falling. *Séracs* crashed on every glacier. Snow in vast masses slid off every slope. As many as a score of avalanches would fall in succession at intervals of less than a minute over a single cliff at the same point, each rolling down in the core of an enveloping cloud of white dust. It was a marvellous sight to behold Rakipushi from Bagrot shaking the snow off his flanks after a storm, crash following crash, the cliffs re-echoing.

The Hunza valley repeated the features of the Indus. It stretched up on either hand to peaks about 24,000 feet in height, its floor being some 5,000 feet above sea-level. One could stand down there and have both peaks visible at once. After marching along the base of a mountain for three or four days its magnitude becomes apparent even to the eye. Once that is tuned to the right scale the majesty of this great scenery is apparent. It grew upon us from day to day but never

became familiar. The people of the valley were an interesting community. They had dwelt for centuries in practical isolation from the rest of the world, cut off above and all round by mountains and below by a gorge most difficult to traverse and very easy to defend. Their livelihood depended on irrigation. The largest piece of cultivable land about this little town of Hunza is watered by a canal carried across cliffs by a bold piece of ancient engineering and only maintained by constant vigilance. The little fields are actually built on countless terraces against the mountain-side. If a community was to support itself under such conditions it needed to be well organised. Life had to be according to rule. All the world over irrigation communities are similar. They cannot exist except under settled and orderly conditions. When population in Hunza increased to the bare subsistence level a bad season involved either starvation or a raid. Thus from time to time Hunzakuts made themselves unpleasantly known to the nearest communities by forays in search of food. Remarkable expeditions carried out by them over mountain passes are recorded. Recurring famines made them dangerous neighbours. They were also jealous of foreigners. It became necessary in the interests of the people of Gilgit, which belonged to Kashmir, to put an end to Hunza raids. An expedition had entered their country six months before my visit and annexed it after a very sporting little campaign which had left no ill-feeling behind it. Money was flowing into the valley; good mule-paths were being made, bridges built; the fear of famine was

gone for ever. We had excellent relations with this interesting people. They believed themselves to have descended from Alexander the Great's army. They were rich in legends and fairy lore. They played polo for us, danced before us in acted drama, carried our loads, sat around our camp fires, and perfectly matched the scenery.

The little Rajadom of Nagar filled the upper part of the valley. Its raja, like him of Hunza, lived in a massively-walled stone castle, thoroughly mediæval in aspect. We followed this valley to its head, which the Hispar glacier fills, passing through one considerable group of villages with a comparatively large area of cultivation, isolated by difficult ways from Nagar and from everywhere else by glaciers and the great mountains. What gave this green expanse a peculiar aspect was the fact that it was the very mould of a great glacier. There were its enormous moraines some 500 feet high, and there its site of greater expansion higher up. Replace the grass by an ice river and the thing was complete, yet no shrunken remnant of it remained. It had all gone back up a side valley and slunk away round a distant corner. Where glaciers are so vast their advances and retreats cover big areas of ground. A couple of marches farther on we came to a village served by many water mills, one below another alongside of a torrent. Since 1892 some glacier, not at that time even visible, has advanced and overwhelmed village and mills under a hundred feet of ice. Everything is catastrophic in these great mountains. Sometimes a whole hillside falls into a valley and dams it across. A

lake forms behind it and fills to the brim, then overflows and cuts down the dam. Presently it bursts and the lake is discharged at once, pouring down the valley and sweeping away every village in its path. Such sudden floods have filled the Indus and rushed forth into the North Indian plain, unexpected there. One of them overwhelmed an encamped army a century or two ago and utterly wiped it out.

The Himalaya and mountains behind it are not like the Alps, a relatively settled range. They are young ranges, jutting up in crude perpendicularity into the sky and rapidly disintegrating under the action of hot sunshine, cold frost, and heavy snowfalls. In time the sharp peaks will be blunted, the cliffs sloped back, the valleys filled, and a much lower and more rounded group of mountains will take their place. Now they are in the early and dramatic stage of their existence. That is why they are so very lofty and why the peaks are so precipitous. Every mountain in the Alps can be climbed. It is rare to find a high Himalayan peak which is even problematically climbable. This is hard doctrine for the ordinary Alpine climber who thinks the word inaccessible should be abolished in application to mountains. We started our journey thus prejudiced, but experience soon changed our view. By this time we had begun to look out for some peak of reasonable size that seemed worth attempting. Outlyers might be climbed, but none of the great mountains thus far beheld offered us a chance of success. Moreover, everything was new to us, and we were utterly at sea as to weather conditions. We had been told that

throughout summer unbroken fine weather was certain. This is true of the valleys, as explained above, but not of the high peaks. They rise into the region of air still laden with moisture and are in the focus of constantly recurring storms of which the dwellers below have no perception. All they see is cloud upon the peaks. They little imagine the unchained rage of the elements thus hidden. As these facts were slowly borne in upon us they added cumulatively to that sense of power, grandeur and mystery which the first sight of the inner mountain region had conveyed. The insignificance and transitoriness of man was obvious in such a presence. If he had been in our place, would not the Psalmist have written: "When I behold the great mountains in the day of their power, what is man?"

# CHAPTER XIV

## THE HISPAR PASS

OUR first great undertaking was not to climb a high mountain, but to discover and cross a long snow pass which was believed to exist. Near the point we had now reached the snout of a great glacier was vaguely marked upon the map. Some eighty miles away in Baltistan the snout of another glacier was likewise mapped. The two stretched backward convergently into the heart of the unexplored snow region, and tradition asserted that Nagar people had gone up one glacier and come down the other to the village of Askoley near its foot. Such traditions in the Himalaya are untrustworthy. I investigated many, equally firmly believed but utterly false. It was, therefore, in doubt and trepidation that I approached the foot of the first glacier, the Hispar. Its huge black, broken snout bulged into view, pouring forth a dirty river and continually tumbling rocks into it. On either hand were ranges of mountains evidently stretching back far and straight, but between them all was hidden by the glacier's own mountainous end.

I climbed a thousand feet or so up the valley side to reconnoitre. It was a dull afternoon. A level grey pall of cloud roofed in the ranges high aloft. Coming out on a shoulder of a commanding buttress I suddenly confronted the great Hispar glacier and beheld it in its

whole forty miles of length at one glance from its black, stone-covered end to the wide white pass at its head. I think it was the most solemn view I ever beheld. The valley is extraordinarily straight. Down it in the direction from which we had come the mountains beyond Hunza were visible fifty miles away. Forward, beyond our pass, there were greater mountains peeping over at a distance from us of at least sixty miles. It must be a rare occasion when one can stand nearly at the bottom of a valley and command a total length of view of upwards of one hundred miles. For once the distance beheld looked its true dimensions. I should have guessed it at that without the map to help. Backward one glanced; it was forward that one gazed, not merely because fate lay in that direction, but overwhelmed by the rapture of the scene. Here, indeed, was a highway into another world with which man had nothing to do. It might lead into a land of dragons, or giants, or ghosts. The very thought of man vanished in such surroundings, and there was no sign of animal life. The view was like seen music. Nowhere was there a bright patch of sunshine. The lower half of the glacier was densely blanketed over with stones, grey, brown, or black. The vast snowfields beyond were all a pallid grey. Nothing glittered. Silence was only broken by a faint hum of moving waters. No stone stirred. No avalanche fell. All appeared still as death, and I sat motionless an hour or more and felt as though time had ceased.

On July 11 we started up the great glacier. Three days later we sent half our caravan southward over the

Nushik Pass to meet us at Askoley. On July 18 our main caravan reached the summit of the Hispar Pass (17,650 feet). The journey had been difficult for laden coolies, but we had no casualties and no desertions. The actual col was beyond a vast inclined plain of snow, and it seemed long before we could look over the other side and estimate our chances of descent. At last the foreground fell away and the unknown was revealed. Another wonderful and wholly novel kind of view smote upon our vision. What we beheld was a great flat lake of snow, surrounded and embayed by mountains all of snow and rock. There was not a patch of grass-alp anywhere visible, nothing but the elemental skeleton of the world. Arms of the lake reached back into recesses between capes and buttresses of the peaks; and branches vanished behind corners, but the visible extent was wide enough. To our dismay no outlet was visible. Reason told us that one must exist, but the eye could not discover it, though we guessed where it might be.

Before actually reaching the pass I had halted awhile to survey for the last time the valley and glacier we had mounted. What a glorious view it was! The snowfield, cut across by the curved outlines of deep crevasses, showing near their lips just a suggestion of blue, dropped steeply away from our feet, leaving for foreground a single tower of ice fringed with icicles and tinted blue on its steepest face. From the foot of the first slope the glacier swept grandly away in the gracefullest curves, turning one jutting headland after another and then putting on its dark cloak of moraine

and vanishing beneath it. On either hand was a long line of peaks, stretching arms down to the glacier and rearing rugged crests proudly aloft. The sky was clear and calm. There was not a movement in the air. Far off one tiny cloud, alone in the blue, floated motionless. The mountain avenue hence beheld draws its long length away for a hundred miles.

On all this we turned our backs. A few paces down the slope beyond the col Nagar, Hunza, and the Hispar glacier were utterly hidden. Little cared we. The watershed was passed; we were descending into Baltistan, to us unknown, and the entry to it was invested with a magnificence scarcely to be surpassed by any scenery in the world. Arrived on the floor of the snow-lake, its wide gateway of discharge was soon revealed to us. The rocky arm of a peak thrust forth had hidden it from above; once round the end of the arm we could look straight down another glacier, wider than the Hispar and as long, like it also leading majestically to inhabited regions. It is called the Biafo, and debouches in the Braldu valley near Askoley. We camped beside the portal of the lake and next day adventured away out upon its surface. The immense width of the snowfield could only be grasped by walking over it. The surface had but an imperceptible inclination. It was unbroken by rift or crevasse and unspotted by rock or dust. The snow that melted in the hot sunshine of the day saturated the surface and made it a wet sponge into which we sank almost to the knee. As the foot was withdrawn the hole left by the leg instantly filled with ice-cold water. We waded

thus hour after hour in intense discomfort, as five years later Garwood and I were to wade through similar snow-slush on the glaciers of Spitsbergen. I have only encountered a like unpleasant experience in the Alps at one place—out on the flat area where the three great branches of the Aletsch glacier meet near the Concordia hut. The wide level snowfield of the Biafo at the outlet of the snow-lake is floor to a glorious avenue of peaks. They rise on both sides of the glacier for some fifteen miles, one beyond another, a series of spires, needle sharp, walled about with precipices on which no snow can rest, and separated from one another by broken *couloirs*, wherein tottering masses of snow are for a while arrested till each in turn is dislodged and falls with an overwhelming crash on the slopes far below. The aiguilles of Chamonix possess an impetuosity of outline that impresses every spectator, but these Braldu pikes outjut them in steepness, outnumber them a hundred, perhaps a thousandfold in multitude, and outreach them in size. The highest of them flings its daring summit more than 23,000 feet into the air and looks abroad over a field of mountains unsurpassed in the world for grandeur. I named this peak the Ogre. Another party that some years later followed my footsteps in the reverse direction discourteously tried to alter the name to—I forget what!

By great good luck we were blessed evening after evening with beautiful sunsets, no two alike, but all glorious. The valley trended toward the south-east so that the mountain wall alongside and the peaks that closed the vista at the glacier's end were dyed with the

effulgence of the foundering sun. On one occasion a breaking wave of cloud curled over all the battlements of the Ogre's ridge, when rocks and mist were like molten gold. Presently the gulf of the valley was inundated with purple, while the mountains rising at its end, barred with beds of cloud, were grey against a sky of incredible blue which melted higher up to red and faded into a violet zenith.

The glacier remained of purest ice for more than half its length. Crevasses and moulins penetrating its substance shimmered to their depths with all tones of transparent blue. Blue also were the beds of the surface streams that often wandered long distances between high ice-banks before plunging thunderously out of sight. Somewhat more than half-way down conditions changed. The valley narrowed and the slope steepened. The compressed ice was wedged up in longitudinal ridges, thinning into walls, while at the same time the whole surface undulated in transverse waves which steadily increased in size as we advanced, presenting steep fronts upstream and long slopes downward. Moraines now invaded more and more of the surface till only the walls of compression stood up out of the stone-covering; crevasses became impediments; glacier tables multiplied like a field of giant mushrooms. We were driven from the glacier to the bank and from the bank to the glacier. Streams had to be waded. Minor difficulties multiplied. The last day we struggled over a huge moraine that buried the glacier under a great depth of unstable débris, large and small. It was a pleasure to leave this laborious

area behind and to tread at last the floor of the Braldu valley where Biafo's river presently joined that which discharges the drainage of the huge basins of the Baltoro and Punmah glaciers. A few miles' walking and a scramble over a cliff, whose base is washed by the broad and raging torrent, brought us to a shady camping-ground in the recondite valley of Askoley. In years to come, if ever this mountain group, supremely magnificent among all the mountain groups in the world, is made accessible to the travelling public, Askoley will be its Zermatt. I, for one, hope that it may long be spared that fate. Now it is only accessible with extreme difficulty by any route, as all the valleys that lead to it are gorges and all the passes that avoid them are high and not easy.

Eleven days had been spent halting beside or descending the Biafo from the pass to Askoley. So far as mere walking was concerned the expedition could have been accomplished in two days, but the difficulty was to advance at all, to tear oneself away from the supreme splendours of this incomparable region. The scenery of the Hispar possesses imposing amplitude; its attendant mountains, very lofty, stand each at the head of a side glacier of some length tributary to the main ice-river. But the peaks of Biafo on the east side rise fairly plumb at the glacier's edge and are besides of a more precipitous character and fringed aloft with uncounted spires. Hispar might have seemed tame after Biafo. As I look back upon some thirty seasons of climbing in various parts of the world I can remember none which produced upon me the

abiding impression that I carried away from the Biafo valley. The days spent there were enchanted. Romance almost became a reality. The gods were very near at hand. We touched as it were the skirts of their garments. Yet even at the culminating moments of these strenuous dream-days there still lingered the sense of incompleteness, of something lacking. The secret was almost disclosed, but never quite, the veil never entirely withdrawn. Alas! The Vedic poet was eternally right; "Him that created these things thou shalt never know. Something else stands between thee and Him. Enveloped in mist and with faltering voice the poet moves along, rejoicing in life." We did indeed rejoice in life in enviable fullness, but the heavenly vision remained always a little misty, and words failed me then and fail me now to tell the hundredth part of the glories I beheld, or the millionth part of those that clear eyes and a heart perfectly attuned might have comprehended. Something else was always there standing between me and Him. Must it ever be so? Is the veil never to be rent? Is the Land of Romance always just beyond, just within the door over whose threshold we can never step? Such, apparently, are the limitations of the living; but for this once, at least, I stood close to the threshold with the door ajar.

## CHAPTER XV

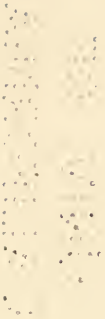
### THE BALTORO

ON July 31 we quitted Askoley to explore the Baltoro glacier and to search for and climb some high peak near its head. We were back again on September 5. During the whole of that time supplies had to be carried with us on the backs of coolies over ground almost continuously difficult and always laborious. Askoley is 10,360 feet above sea-level. Our highest camp was approximately at 20,000 feet. The distance as the crow flies between the village and the farthest point reached is about fifty miles.

The lower part of the Baltoro glacier was not entirely unknown. It had been traversed by Godwin-Austen and by Younghusband. I had had the advantage of long talks with both and knew pretty well the kind of work awaiting us. The *bandobast* or organisation of supplies was complicated, involving much detail. Arrangements made worked so well that even the mails were delivered regularly at our camp up to a height of 18,000 feet. We drove a flock of sheep and goats to the last grass, whence coolies day by day brought milk, fresh butter, meat and fuel to wherever our tents were pitched. Not a single casualty occurred to any of them during the whole expedition.

The journey to the foot of the glacier took four days and involved many difficulties. The sheep and goats

THE BROAD PEAK, BALTORO GLACIER, HIMALAYAS.



and all the loads, 103 in number, had to be carried over a crazy rope-bridge—a very slow process when only one man could be allowed on it at a time. There were also several streams to be waded, rushing torrents with beds of rolling rocks. One was only just fordable by the aid of a rope stretched across for support against the weight of water. It was an insignificant brook when we camped near its bank one evening and might have been crossed with utmost ease, but during the night a glacier-lake must have burst and flooded it, for in the morning it was more than a hundred yards wide and in places over waist-deep. The crossing filled five hours with hard work. Not long after it had been safely accomplished the torrent ran dry! The valley traversed was mainly a desert with an oasis or two, apparently once cultivated. There was also the abandoned settlement of gold-washers. When the snout of the Baltoro glacier appeared it proved to be larger even than those of Biafo and Hispar and covered by a more mountainous load of moraine than either. Falls of ice from the end into the issuing torrent were almost arctic in size and made camping near the river bank dangerous, for the waves of the splashes washed up to a height of ten feet or more, and one of them nearly carried the Gurkhas' tent away.

The scenery was not striking till the glacier was reached; I even called the Braldu valley in this part ugly. Some peaks of notable form stand as doorposts to the world of ice where it is entered, but it was not till we had advanced a few days' journey up the glacier that its wonders began to be revealed. The route

traversed during the first two marches led along a monstrous trough with cliffs on one hand and craggy slopes and ridges on the other. These were the knees of greater mountains and hid all the higher and nobler parts from our sight. After the second day the glacier widened and the giant peaks began to be revealed. Let it be understood that the surroundings of the basin of the Baltoro are in fact the most stupendous in the world. Gaurisankar (Everest) alone is higher than K.2., Kinchinjanga almost as high, but both considerably surpass their neighbours in altitude, whereas K.2. is only one of a group of vast peaks whose average height is much greater than that of any other assemblage of mountains on the surface of the earth. K.2., the Broad Peak, Gusherbrum, the Hidden Peak, and Masherbrum are all mountains of from 26,000 to 28,000 feet. Their satellites over 23,000 feet high are too numerous to be counted. All these peaks rise from the Baltoro glacier and are visible from its higher reaches. The broad simplicity of the Hispar and the trenchlike grandeur of Biafo cannot be compared with the overwhelming magnificence of the upper Baltoro, but that is only disclosed gradually and after days of toilsome struggle. It was indeed fortunate for me that I chanced to take them in the best order. Had the Baltoro come first perhaps the other two would have been less impressive.

I forget during how many marches we toiled over the monstrous moraine covering or along the right bank of the glacier. Could we have seen over the bulging centre to the left side we should have discovered the

MASHERBRUM, FROM CRYSTAL PEAK, HIMALAYAS.

much easier way there which we used in our descent. We had to take things as they came. Nothing exceeds in toilsomeness such ground. The rocks lying about were large and all were loose, they were piled into mounds or waves. We must always be going up or down. There were quantities of lakes on the ice to be circumvented and glacier streams with vertical ice-banks to be crossed. You cannot wade these streams, for their floor is smooth ice and the current would instantly sweep you away on such slippery footing. You must travel alongside till you find an overhanging place that can be jumped. This makes the route tantalisingly circuitous. You are frequently forced to go in an undesired direction, it may be a mile out of your way—a serious matter when a whole day's march for coolies over such ground may not be more than three miles.

About twenty miles from the foot of the glacier we made a couple of expeditions up its north bank to a peak and a saddle each over 18,000 feet high, relatively trifling elevations amid such surroundings. K.2.'s summit was still some 10,000 feet higher, rising as much above us as Monte Rosa above Zermatt. The purpose of these climbs was to reconnoitre K.2., but they revealed only its summit heaving above an intervening ridge. We were not, however, unrewarded, for we could at last look up and down the huge glacier and across it to the wide and splendid north face of Masherbrum. Thus displayed, that mountain is perhaps the finest I have ever seen and the most uncompromisingly inaccessible. Imagine a snow-draped

pyramid like the Weisshorn lifted far aloft on a wide-spreading foundation of splintered buttresses fringed with rows of aiguilles, large and small, in countless multitude. The sides of the ridges are grooved like corduroy with avalanche tracks. Between the ridges are hanging glaciers, and larger glacier arms deeply penetrate the mass. The ridges are all parallel and of like gracefully curved outline. One beyond another they sweep down to the Baltoro and form a perfect composition like the feathers of an eagle's extended wing. It is an exceptionally fine example of mountain architecture, a natural composition, almost resembling an artistic creation. The immense sweep of the glacier, hence visible from its foot to the monumental Golden Throne at its head, bound all the parts of half the panorama together.

Below us the glacier's whole twenty miles was stone-covered; farther up the white ice appeared and swept back to the spotless *névés* that rose to the skyline. Another day's march would carry us to a broad open space almost at our feet where the three greatest branches of the glacier joined; one passing round a corner to the left would lead straight to K.2.; another up which we looked was closed by the Golden Throne; the third disappeared on the right behind a notable double-summited mountain shaped like a mitre. The Golden Throne was the great discovery of the day—a broad and rounded peak with a glacier in its bosom, which discharged in avalanches over a mighty ice-cliff. It looked like a mountain that might be climbed, given time enough. Next to it was a graceful white pyramid,

the Bride, obviously possible of access under suitable conditions of time and weather. The Duke of the Abruzzi many years later made on it his notable ascent. Nearer at hand stood the chisel-like head of giant Gusherbrum—an enormous cliff, brightly coloured—and farther round the wide and rather confused mass of the Broad Peak, now (like the Golden Throne and the Bride) for the first time beheld and named. We spent a memorable hour and more in sight of this panorama, monstrously magnificent. It was a kind of Gornergrat view doubled in scale. The peaks beheld from the Swiss view-point rise from 3,000 to 5,000 feet above it. Those in sight from Crystal Peak surpass it by from 6,000 to 10,000 feet and are of incomparably more striking architecture.

Next day we camped at the meeting-place of the branches and there sat out a period of storm and heavy snowfall. When the clouds at length cleared away behold the majesty of K.2. almost too brilliant for the eye to rest upon in its mantle of sunlit white! It was clear from base to summit, a broad and heavy mass, four-faced and four-ridged like the Great Pyramid, inaccessible by any route that we could see, and, as was afterwards proved, impregnable also on the other side. It is an imposing mountain, inferior for beauty of form to several neighbours, but indubitably grand and well set at the head of its own special glacier, which great rock walls confine and frame. Here for me the glory of this transcendent scenery culminated. The impression had been cumulative from day to day. We had marched along the whole base of Masherbrum and

beheld it from below and from above before we could realise the scale upon which it is built. We had sighted Gusherbrum from afar and were now encamped at the foot of that high-soaring cliff which is like the façade of an incredible cathedral. Each arm of the glaciers here uniting was about two miles wide. Everything was gigantic. Our eyes had adjusted themselves to new units of measurement and could see things as they actually were. For me those were great days—days of high romance. Wonder pervaded them. Dawn, noon and eve—the frosty starlit night, storm, sunshine, and all the progress of the hours were laden with a felt significance. The materials and forces of the world about me were not new, but they were unfamiliarly manifested. The universe posed the same old questions but with novel emphasis. The solution of the riddle, alas! was as far away as ever.

> O Nature's glory, Nature's youth,
> Perfected sempiternal whole!
> And is the World's in very truth
> An impercipient Soul?
> Or doth that Spirit, past our ken,
> Live a profounder life than men,
> Await our passing days, and thus
> In secret places call to us?

Beneath sunny skies we advanced to the base of the Golden Throne and there romance began to fade. We fought a way up a great ice-fall that impeded access to the highest snow-field. We outweathered another terrible storm. We camped in blasting heat by day and bitter cold by night at the foot of our mountain;

then forced the camp yet farther up it and finally essayed the peak. It was a fine climb up a steep snow-slope to an *arête* of ice and rock, and along that, over one peak after another, till we found the ridge cut through by a deep depression and the actual mountain rising over 1,000 feet above and beyond, for us hopelessly virgin. The highest point we passed over was named Pioneer Peak. Its elevation as measured by our barometer was some 22,600 feet, but when I used the same instrument in the Andes I had reason to doubt its reliability. Bad weather prevented a trigonometrical measurement. The views in these upper regions, except in so far as they commanded very distant prospects, did not differ in character from those beheld about the high *névés* of any mountain range. They were of the common snowy type. The rocky giants were hidden behind less imposing walls and ridges. We merely saw larger extensions of snowfield and bigger mounds, ridges, and pyramids of snow rising out of them. There was little that was unusual in the glacial features which, high aloft, are the same all the world over. Romance, I suppose, was vanishing. Exaltation of heart was wearing out. I turned to descend, chastened in spirit though enriched with memories and experiences well worth the appalling labour by which they had been won.

The descent was not devoid of excitement. We had remained on the summit till after 4 P.M., and the sun was due to set about six o'clock. It was impossible to advance very quickly along the narrow *arête*, but we were urgent in haste till one of the Gurkhas slipped out

of his steps and shot violently down the ice-slope on the left. The rope held and saved him from being dashed to pieces over a precipice some distance below. Sunset colours painted the sky and the distant landscape of range beyond mountain range that opened before us along the *arête*. Night was near when we reached the point where the ridge could be quitted for the snow-slope. At its foot was the glimmer of a candle in our tent. Darkness had already filled the glacier valley and frost glazed the snow. We sat down on the hard polished surface and let ourselves slide. It was the fastest glissade I ever experienced. We had to chance the *bergschrund*. All shot over it without a hitch, but that flight in the gloom when the yet blacker cavern gaped beneath us, was a high experience.

Of the return journey to Askoley little need be said. We had mounted by the right side of the glacier; we descended along the left, finding easier going, better camping grounds, and helped by more willing coolies. Had these latter been properly shod, as were those employed by our successors, taught by our experience, we should not have wasted much time upon a peak, but tried to force a way over some pass at the head of the great glacier. Later exploration from the other side has failed as yet to reveal the situation of a practicable breach. If one could be found it would be the grandest conceivable pass in the world, for no other can lead through a group of mountains comparable to these in size and boldness of uplift. As it was, we had to return by the way of our coming and in due season were again encamped in the *bagh* of Askoley with our work of

exploration finished. A few other parties, notably the Duke of the Abruzzi's, have followed in our steps and advanced what we began. They have included more and better equipped experts, for all the surveying, photographing, and other scientific work of my expedition was done by me alone. Sella has photographed the wonderful views; skilful surveyors have corrected and enlarged the map. Other travellers in years to come will make the same pilgrimage. All alike when they return to the abodes of men will tell the same story: "Lo! the half was not told us!" It must be so; for not the half—not even the hundredth part of the truth can be conveyed in words to those who have not seen with their eyes the wonders of the Baltoro.

The journey from Askoley back to the Indus valley at Skardo was over well-mapped ground and along fertile and populous valleys, after the Skoro Pass immediately over against Askoley had been left behind. It is always a delightful experience to come from the heights back to the rich vegetation of a valley well watered and warmed. That, I suppose, is why the Shigar valley lingers in my memory as so pleasant a region. In the remote age of greatest glacial extent it was the bed of an ice-river so vast that Biafo, Punmah and Baltoro were insignificant branches of its highest level, and the ice filled them 3,000 feet or so deeper than it fills them now. That is why the traces of glacier action down to the Indus are on so large and emphatic a scale, the old moraines being like ranges of hills rather than banks of débris. I noticed these phenomena in a detached fashion. They were none of my business

to record. I was on the home jaunt, no longer an explorer but a traveller, free to enjoy myself, with instruments finally packed up and put away. All I had to do was to cover the ground in the pleasantest fashion that offered and as quickly as might be.

It was possible to float down the river from Shigar to Skardo on a native raft of peculiar construction, a kind employed on the Tigris by ancient Assyrians and probably thousands of years before them. Ours was fashioned out of a score and a half of sheepskins blown up into bladders and tied beneath a large hurdle or framework of poles. The whole affair was of the craziest kind. Each skin protruded through the floor a pathetic leg by which it could be reinflated, for all the skins leaked, not being tied with cord or string but with bits of tough grass or fresh willow bark. One man had to blow at them all the time. The oars were just raw poles, approximately straight. The navigation employed five men. We five passengers squatted in a row down the middle, leaving the sides free for the boatmen. When the thing was ready it was lifted into the water, and away it floated on the raging torrent. The voyage was uncomfortable but exciting. The current raced. There were rows of great waves; there were rapids and huge outstanding rocks. By poling and rowing these perils were avoided, often, as it appeared, by a narrow shave. At every turn some danger hove in sight which seemed likely to engulf us, but we always just slipped by. The banks rushed past. Water leapt and splashed around and spurted up from below between the skins. The raging torrent shouted. There were likewise calm

stretches. The sun was hot, the sky bright with clouds against the blue, the air fresh, and the water almost ice-cold. Mile after mile we urged along, becoming callous with experience. The confluence with the Indus was reached, the great river crossed, and we landed safely on its left bank below Skardo. Thus ended the adventurous part of our Indian journey in a rapture of wild movement and novel emotion.

## CHAPTER XVI

### LADAKH

WE left Skardo on September 13 and reached Srinagar on October 11. The intervening month was spent in journeyings round by Leh, where I had business in connection with my instruments. Both Skardo and Leh are on the Indus, separated from one another as the crow flies by about 150 miles. The first and last thirds of the route lie along the great river, but the middle third avoids a difficult gorge by circling round among the hills to the south through the large village of Kargil and over the Namika and Fotu passes. Leh is the capital of Ladakh, and Ladakh, though politically united to Kashmir, is geographically, anthropologically, and in religion part of Tibet. When, by this route, Kargil has been left behind the traveller quits the Moslem world and enters that of Buddhism.

The first part of the journey up the Indus valley can be briefly dismissed. It led along a reasonably good hill road, on which one could intermittently ride though the baggage still had to be carried by coolies. From Skardo we sent off all except twenty loads to await me at Srinagar. Thus lightened, and with a much reduced party, we set forward on our way. We had now left the great mountains behind. From the trough of the Indus perpetual snow was seldom seen, but only a few beds and the powdering of the heights

after each storm. The valley itself, not its encompassing hills, was the daily entertainment. It was sufficiently interesting. Its twists and bends changed the outlook continually. There was always a corner ahead to stimulate expectancy and often to reward it with some scenic surprise. The path was seldom level. If for half a mile it followed the river bank it was sure to be forced by some intruding cliff or *parri* to climb, it might be, a thousand feet over it. The ascent might be followed by a mile or two along some shelf of the hills, commanding wider vistas, then we must plunge again by rude zigzags or down a breakneck, rocky staircase to the depths, only to mount once more. There was a monotony of bare grandeur about our valley with its great mountain sides, all of one kind, its succession of precipices, its steep stone slopes and side gullies, its wilderness of jagged fallen rocks, and the booming river sweeping along below in changeless dignity. Here and there by the margin of its spring-time flood-level a green pool of water might lurk under some cliff. Such gems of bright colour were rare in the desert reaches. The monotony of the grey sand below, the ochreous granite on either hand, and the purple hills ahead and behind was seldom thus disturbed.

Irrigated and cultivated oases succeeded one another every few miles. They were sometimes even a mile in length and quite prosperous in aspect. The villages were open and rather well built, some houses with lattice windows, pretty wooden mosques of Central Asian type, and ziarats. Each village had its camping

ground, sometimes dignified by a great chinar tree, and always shaded. Fruit trees, walnuts, and poplars were common. The little fields and farms were well cultivated. In Hunza and Nagar the local rajas dwelt in massive castles, and each village was a fortress, surrounded by dry stone walls as much as fourteen feet thick. The gates were outflanked by strong towers. Even Skardo retained the block-house that used to close the narrow approach by which alone it could be entered along the river. Here in the upper Indus valley local peace has been so long established that the signs of former insecurity are passing away. Some of the village rajas have abandoned their high-planted castles and built themselves modern houses on the flat, with gardens and pavilions. They are settling down into quiet country gentry, with much local influence but little power. Once or twice only did we see traces of a very ancient race dwelling in these parts at the dawn of history. Thus in the valley near Skardo many rounded boulders lying by the river bank are covered with chipped outlines of ibex with enormous horns and designs resembling ladders and other patterns. It was impossible not to be reminded of the like rock decorations near the Laghi delle Meraviglie in the Maritime Alps, which have been proved to belong to the Stone Age, or the prehistoric outline figures on the rocks near El-Kab, in Egypt, and elsewhere. All seem to belong to one remote stage of civilisation.

The valleys of Gilgit, Hunza, and Baltistan had been even more desert than this of the upper Indus,

but they did not produce so heavy a sense of desolation. Perhaps our mood was a factor in the effect. Coming from the high levels of glacier and snow, we found the air soft and sultry. Sleep laid a ponderous hand upon us. We slept long at night and we fell asleep by day at every halting-place. The journey, moreover, was very fatiguing owing to the badness of the so-called road, which was at best a mule-path, and often worse than any goat-track in the Alps. Long practice and familiarity alone made it traversable by the clever ponies. It was seldom blasted or hacked out of the mountain, but rather propped up against it. If a cliff had to be crossed, the road was bracketed out on rude trunks of trees hitched on to natural cracks and ledges in the casualest fashion, the wooden framework being loosely paved with irregular flat stones between which one could see through to overhung depths of many hundreds of feet with the torrent racing far below. There were many such giddy reaches and corners. Round sharp angles the way was often led up or down a spiral staircase so steep that the line of a descending pony's back was almost vertical. The last march along the Indus was worst of all—a succession of dangerous passages even for travellers on foot. We did not wonder that the native road-maker should have judged well to abandon the inhospitable gorge and make a circuit round by way of the Dras valley and its tributary when the chance came.

About a day's march up the Dras valley brought us to a good serviceable bridge, where we joined one

of the main highways of Asia, the caravan route which leads from Kashgar and Yarkand, over the Karakoram Pass, and through Leh to Kashmir and India. This is the easiest land route from China and Central Asia to the regions south of Tibet and the Himalayas. It is not a driving road, but a good mule-path all the way, over most of which a clever pony can trot. Beyond the bridge we presently reached the important village of Kargil. It was evident that we had come into the territory of a new race and that Baltistan had been left behind. Kargil is the capital of a district inhabited by Tibetans who are by religion Mohammedans. It presents the features of a buffer region. Hereabout the character of the scenery changes. Beyond Kargil the views were broad and open, the country rolling up to the foot of finely coloured mountains of moderate elevation but noble form, and narrowing ahead into the valley we were about to mount on our way to the Namika Pass. Some hill-sides were dyed with astonishingly bright colours—blue and red, their mingled débris purple. Such brightly coloured rocks are common between Kargil and Leh. I thought them exceptional till I went to the Andes and found with what a bold brush volcanoes can stain a whole landscape. The soft modelling of the lower slopes all around added to the mountains an element of grace common in the older ranges but absent from the land of young giants we had been exploring. Moreover, all these slopes appeared to wear a thin garment of vegetation. A carpet of scanty grass covered the billowy moorland

traversed by the road. Every blade was autumnally brown or yellow, but to our unaccustomed eyes the effect was luxuriant. We seemed to have come into a land of plenty, though a contrary impression is received by travellers arriving from Kashmir. Light lay broad upon the ground; a graceful profile of hills edged the horizon; the road was good; the ponies fair. We trotted along, glad to be alive, and as though starting on a new journey. All Asia lay before us. Of the folk we met, many had come from Yarkand and beyond. The highway of China was under our feet. For the moment I would gladly have consented to wander on and on indefinitely to the margin of the world.

One march beyond Kargil came a post-runner's hut, and before it a low, wall-sided oblong mound covered with stones, each inscribed with the universal Buddhist formula, "*Om mani padmi hum.*" If in going by you keep the mound close on your right hand, you may count to your credit all these prayers. The ponies know it, and swerve to the left when passing a *mani* mound. Presently we met an individual working a little prayer-wheel as he walked along. It was a small cylindrical box full of the same exclamation written over and over again on pieces of paper. The box is at the end of a short concentric handle, and is easily rotated by a movement of the hand. Each rotation credits the holder with all those prayers. Even such an effort can be avoided by help of water-power. We saw many little streams equipped with one or several small water-wheels turning wooden

boxes, like churns, full of prayers. I suppose the owner of the mills obtains the benefit of the prayers. All inhabited Ladakh and Tibet is thus outfitted with contrivances for uttering the Buddhist formula. It is well that founders of religions pass away. Would not they be disgusted if they could behold the mechanical and ritualistic developments under which superstitious mankind buries their fine ideals?

It was evident that we had come into the territory of a new religion and had left the world of Islam. Nothing alters the atmosphere of travel like coming up against a people of a fresh religion, especially if it be one like the Lamaism of Tibet, which proclaims itself alongside every footpath. Chortens, which are a sort of mud-built pagodas, whitewashed and painted, containing relics of the dead, stand near most villages and are prominent objects. Gonpas, in occupation and more in ruin, look down on villages or crown prominent hills or flank the faces of cliffs into which their chambers are burrowed storey above storey behind a built-up façade. Occasionally one comes across some gigantic figure crudely modelled in mud against cliff or wall or carved in stone, such as the great Chamba of Mulbei, which is so big that the lower part of the legs and the feet alone enter the temple beneath it. A natural tower of rock is its support, and rags of bright colour flutter from sticks on the top. Some peculiar natural feature of rock or cave appears as a rule to have decided the site of a sacred place.

A barren glen leads up to the Namika Pass, its

sides sandy slopes and ribs of sandy débris, its bottom the dry bed of an intermittent torrent. The sandy foreground was bright in sunshine, the distance dark purple under shadow of clouds. I was quite alone in the windings of the narrowing valley. Desert to right and left, desert behind and before. A lizard was the only living thing. A distant jackal's bark disturbed the utter silence. A blade of rock on the skyline marked the pass. The Fotu Pass, crossed next day, was similar—the views always of bare, undulating ground of ochreous colour, with a distance of hills almost as purple as in the Arctic regions. Thus after a long descent and the turning of a corner we came suddenly upon strange Lamayuru, a considerable monastery planted on the summit of a decapitated group of vertical earth pyramids, with a village at its foot. The monastery, like all large gonpas, consists of a group of buildings, each a little house, piled step-like together, with many red-painted verandas and with chortens patched about among the buildings. *Mani* mounds radiated along all the approaches, some several hundred yards in length; praying water-wheels squeaked and rattled; lamas were walking about; the whole place reeked of Lamaism. Peasants were working the fields for the lazy lamas, and singing at the threshing floor the kind of simple little air endlessly repeated which you may hear all over the world from China to Peru. Through a gorge below this village the next march brought us back to the Indus valley, where it is for the most part wide and flat-floored. Leh was at the end of a two days' ride.

The capital of Ladakh has been so often described that it may here be briefly dismissed. Its central feature is the market-place. When the big caravans arrive in spring and autumn it presents an animated and picturesque scene. It was relatively quiet when we were there, but there was always a sense of being in one of the nodal points of far-wandering men. Having come thus far, I was determined not to return without sight of the great monastery of Himis. It alone in these parts can be regarded as resembling the great establishments of Lhasa, with which, in fact, it is in close connection. The visit involved a three days' trip, and was well repaid. Himis is a town, a collection of houses and temples and other religious structures, inhabited solely by lamas. The houses rise one above another, and collectively reminded me of a north Italian hill-village. It is walled about, and entered by well-guarded gateways. The houses are built of mud, square-sided and flat-roofed. But for the balconied windows and the porticoes they would be plain cubes. The temples are of markedly Chinese character. They too are built of mud, with beams and supports of wood, much carved and brightly painted. Internally they consist of several chambers, large and small, with galleries and pillars of wood. They are full of decorative objects of devotion. The central feature in the main hall is a silver chorten of considerable size, placed like the altar in a church. The hanging banners, strips of silk and ribbon, painted or embroidered pictures, and paintings on the walls produce a great effect. They glow with

colour. There are also very many sculptured figures, large and small, in metal or painted clay, rows of figures seated like Buddhas and often of a surprisingly life-like character. In front of each temple is a courtyard whence steps lead up to the pillared porch. In one of these a devil-dance was performed for me by the lamas, a striking display of moving colour and extravagant costume, the evident intention of the ceremony being exorcism of evil spirits. The whole experience was weird and most interesting. I spent two nights in the gonpa in rooms that looked out on the aforesaid court with the temple façade opposite my balcony. It was with regret that I turned my back upon this strange home of devil-worshippers and set my face resolutely to return to Christian lands and home.

From Leh to Srinagar we followed the main caravan route, returning in our own tracks as far as the Dras valley, and mounting that to the well-known Zoji Pass, which gives access to the Sind valley of Kashmir. It was an eleven days' ride, made up of nineteen caravan marches, but I lengthened it by one or two excursions in quest of antiquities. The people we passed or encountered on the road were a constant joy. Now it would be a pilgrim on his way to Mecca, inattentive to all else save his distant goal; or, again, a Jesuit missionary travelling upward to his destined field of labour. There were post-runners and nondescript individuals. One such walking alone saluted us at a junction of tracks and asked which was the way to Yarkand, as though that were some neighbouring

village. Some of these wayfarers were strangely picturesque, notably so the Mecca pilgrim and a ragged, light-hearted individual who came running along with wide-scattering limbs and brandishing a club. We met also caravans of laden horses and mules clouded in dust, which the sun illumined into the likeness of a halo of glory. No day passed without some entertaining encounters. One night we encamped with a Yarkandi merchant carrying to Kashmir carpets, felts (*namdahs*), and a preparation of hemp for smoking. I cheapened his carpets over cups of brick-tea and sugar-candy, and some of them are still in my possession. Another casually met merchant supplied me with a considerable sum of money on the verbal understanding that I would pay the amount to a relative of his at Peshawar. He altogether refused to accept any written acknowledgment.

Thus we came to the watershed of Kashmir and began the steep descent toward India. The snow-mountains about the pass were much like the Alps in apparent size. Our descent brought us first into the region of the birch, now leafless; the graceful stems closely packed together and glittering in sunshine looked from afar off like a gossamer haze upon the slopes. Turning over a bend, we plunged 2,000 feet down into an autumn-tinted forest of amber and gold, then among the pines by which the lower hillsides were densely wooded. Only by contrast is the Sind valley beautiful. It is not comparable to such North Italian beauty spots as the Val Maggia, which I name merely as one example out of many. It

served, however, to give the thrill of contrast by comparison with the region from which we were coming. A day was devoted *en route* to visiting the ruined temples of Wangat perched high up on a hill-side. Very different are they from the shrines of Tibetan Lamaism, for they were built in the ancient days when the pure religion of Buddha covered Kashmir and much of India. Jungle was invading them, and unless quickly taken in hand they would soon have perished. I believe they have since been excavated and are well cared for. Next day a long ride brought me to the Dal Lake, where my companions were already awaiting me in a comfortable house-boat and with many of the so-called luxuries of civilisation.

After a few days at Srinagar and others at Abbottabad, I paid hasty visits to Peshawar, the Khyber Pass, Amritsar, Simla, Delhi, Agra and the Taj, and Gwalior. A short excursion to see the Sanchi Tope, another ancient Buddhist monument, and a day's outing from Bombay to the Elephanta Temple concluded my Indian wanderings. By sea we voyaged to Trieste, and thence by train to Venice, which was under snow and in fog, a fog as dense as any I have ever known in London, and spread over Western Europe from North Italy to Calais, except where, in mounting the St. Gothard, we for a while rose into sunshine above it. Half-way across the Straits of Dover it ended in a sudden wall. Kent was clear, and so was London, when I arrived there on December 20, just in time for the annual dinner of the Alpine Club.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE ALPS FROM END TO END IN 1894

ENCAMPED in scorched idleness on the highest level of the Hispar glacier one blazing afternoon, I said to Zurbriggen, "When we get back to Europe, let us make through the Alps such a journey as we have been making in these mountains. Let us travel the Alps from end to end. That, by the way, would be a good title for a book." The title, if not the plan, took root in my mind. On June 1, 1894, the party about to set forth on its execution were assembled in a hotel at Turin. They consisted of Edward Fitzgerald and his two guides, Aymonod and Louis Carrel, two of the Gurkhas, Kirbir and Amar Sing, who had been with me under Bruce in the Himalaya, and Zurbriggen. The two Gurkhas were sent from India that they might continue their mountaineering education and become qualified to instruct their comrades in mountain-craft. Of those who started, Zurbriggen soon left, as his services were unnecessary. Fitzgerald sporadically accompanied us; he and his guides finally quitted at the Brenner Pass. Only the two Gurkhas and I made the whole journey. The complete story has been told in my book, which has passed through various editions, the last in Nelson's cheap series. I shall make no attempt to re-tell it

here, but will confine myself to general considerations and subjective experiences.

The point of division between Alps and Apennines is fixed at the Colle di Tenda, north of Ventimiglia. The last snow-peak at the east end is the Ankogel. From Limone, where our journey may be said to have commenced, to Lend, near Wildbad Gastein, where it ended, we climbed 21 peaks and 39 passes, spending in all 86 days from start to finish, 65 of them on the march.

As our eyes had carried the Alpine scale to the Himalayas, and only by degrees adjusted themselves to a true estimate of size, so now I brought back the Himalayan scale and over-estimated altitudes and distances beheld. An experience in the Lake district had already warned me of this fault. Horace Walker and I had climbed Scafell and wandered on to the top of one of the Langdale Pikes. Arrived on the summit, we found it was not the highest point; that was separated from us by a stony area. The sun was already setting, and we had to reach Dungeon Gill Hotel before night. Walker pointed to our peak and said we must go across to that. I replied that we should be benighted if we did. "How long," he asked, "do you guess it would take us to get there?" About an hour was my estimate. "Trust my local knowledge," he answered, "and come along. I will bring you to the inn before night!" We ran down our peak, crossed the stony flat, and climbed the highest rock-mound, all in seven minutes! The hillocks of rock had looked to me like considerable peaks,

and the distance between them was not the half-mile I had supposed, but one or two hundred yards!

I imagine that the Maritime Alps, the first group we attacked, may similarly have gained in aspect of size. At all events they have left an abiding impression upon my memory. I had not been among them before, nor have I returned to them, yet they are one of the districts of the Alps that linger in my mind as most admirable. Argentera must be a fine peak at any time. In June it and all its neighbours were dignified by masses of winter snow. I do not, however, think of peaks when the Maritimes are named, but of the incomparable valleys, especially the Valdieri, which combines rich vegetation and lush meadows with the loveliest of transparent running brooks, and a torrent winding about in a little gorge of its own cut deep into the valley floor. It was, moreover, the month of flowers. Every ascent led up hill-sides that were wild gardens, broad-flushed with sheets of blossom the like of which I had never before beheld. The easy scramble to the Pelvo d'Elva was thus glorified. At our feet, when on the summit, lay the Piedmontese plain, soft and faintly varied in violet tones and decorated with sinuous silver ribbons of water; southward the Apennines, with a wave of cloud pouring over the passes and melting into the haze over the plain; strips of cumulus clouds lazily voyaging beneath the blue; a foreground of intricate valleys, green on the south, bare on their northern slopes.

The king of the Cottians is Monte Viso, with whose graceful pyramid every climber from Zermatt

or Chamonix becomes distantly familiar. The ascent was made in bad weather and with the mountain in bad condition, but it was an amusing scramble. Snow was falling heavily when we left the summit. The descent was in a freezing gale, which followed us angrily to our night's resting-place. The Cottians on the other side of the frontier are beloved by some French climbers. As peaks they did not interest me, with the exception of the Viso. I was glad to leave them behind and to approach the Western Graians. Of course it would have been pleasant to take some of the great Dauphiné peaks on our way, but the season was too early for the fine ones; moreover the whole Dauphiné group lies off the main line of the Alps, in a pocket of its own. It was not along the axis of our route. Hence I have nothing to say of Meije or Écrins or the stony valleys so often described.

We entered the new district at Modane, on the Mount Cenis railway. In weather continuously bad and over heavy accumulations of winter snow, we crossed the Dôme de Chasseforêt and traversed cols beneath Grande Casse and Grande Motte, both peaks inaccessible in such days. Our journey had to be quickly carried through, weather or no, and when peaks denied themselves we had to be content with passes. Day after day we pounded through soft snow which extended down to low levels and covered the grassy Alps. At Val d'Isère luck changed, so that we could traverse the fine pyramid named the Grande Sassière. From its summit the main Alpine chain was for the first time revealed; the Gurkhas were

wild with delight. There stood Mont Blanc, the greatest impediment to be surmounted, very glorious in aspect, with only the Ruitor massif between us and its foot, for I had already climbed the chief Graian peaks and needed not to go aside and seek them.

Thus far the romance of our progress had lain in fair valleys and flowery alps. The peak climbs, even of Viso and Sassière, had been just ordinary scrambles, enjoyable but unromantic save for the storm. The traverse of Ruitor was a far more emotional experience, not by reason of difficulty or danger, but for the sheer glory of the world. I remember few expeditions so rich in precious hours. Ruitor is scarcely worth calling a peak; its characteristic feature is an extensive snow-field raised on high. This great white sheet is a conspicuous object in the view from the Pennine Mountains. We reached the edge of it by climbing up the S. Grat cirque—a desolate amphitheatre rising by slopes and terraces to a level sky-line. The ascent had been made in clouds and threatening weather. We saw nothing from the highest point, but the mist itself supplied some lovely effects, for it was delicate and sparkling. The pure and intricately rippled snow-field on which we stood disappeared into it in all directions. The circle of the soaring sun could just be discerned. The air was soft; silence reigned; our surroundings were as though spun of fairy webs, evanescent. A writhing and flickering supervened as in a chaos taking shape. For a moment heat as of a blast furnace scorched us. We tore off our coats,

*Photo: Spencer.*

MONT BLANC, FROM THE AIGUILLE VERTE.

wrapped our heads in them, and cast ourselves in sudden agony on the snow. Perhaps some lens of denser air passing overhead acted as a burning glass and concentrated the sun's heat upon us. The torture lasted but a few seconds. I have had but one other like experience. Long a man could not have lived through it. Then vague and changeful shapes trembled into view and vanished. Wisps of mist eddied around. Presently the curtain was altogether withdrawn, and there shone the whole range of Mont Blanc, radiant in beauty and clear in every detail, standing up beyond the broad and spotless foreground of snow on which we stood. Toward this vision we descended to the glacier's foot, then down the great steps of a terraced valley with pools on the terraces and waterfalls over the cliffs, one lovely scene following another till we stood upon the road of the Little St. Bernard, and thus returned to the houses and hotels of ordinary mankind.

Courmayeur was quitted on June 26, and Chamonix reached the following day over the summit of Mont Blanc. It was the first ascent of the year, and we were thrice lucky to chance at this early season upon days when the climb was possible. We could not have waited for them. The ascent began up the Miage glacier, the most Himalayan-looking in the Alps, for its lower end, stone-covered, moundy and disagreeable, gives a dim sort of idea of the Baltoro. Our route turned off to the right up the tributary Dôme glacier, which falls between two buttresses of rock from the ridge joining the Dôme du Goûter with

the Aiguille de Bionnassay. A comfortable hut high up on one of these buttresses sheltered us for the night. From the door we looked back over Ruitor's snows. White Sassière's pyramid rose above some clouds, but the night view was most wonderful when the moon crowned Trélatête with silver and caught the crest of Bionnassay's slender ridge while leaving our valley in darkest shadow. Faint suggestions of peaks and soft clouds floating in light-permeated air filled the far distance.

An hour or two after midnight we were afoot climbing an ice-staircase to the snow-slopes, plateaux, and huge crevasses of the *névé* of the Dôme. We passed between cavernous crevasses and under ice-falls wedged between jutting buttresses of splintered rock. Thus without untoward incident, after long labour of step-cutting, we came out upon the ridge which to the right led easily to the Dôme du Goûter, while to the left it narrowed to a knife-edge and swept up with perfect grace to the delicate summit of the Bionnassay Aiguille. Geneva's lake was at our feet and a purple haze, enveloping all the lower hill-country and the plains beyond. Above the Dôme the ordinary route from Chamonix was joined at the Vallot hut, whence Kirbir led to the summit, cutting many a step along the windy *arête* of the Bosses. At noon Europe was below us, and the panoramic view was clear. Many little clouds floated in the sky, but hid no mountains. The fascination of the prospect was in the clouds, in the flocks of little ones at our feet and the soft white billows far away, as it were, breaking on a wide

and shallow shore, with blue between and beneath them. After a long halt we pounded down to Chamonix.

It might have been supposed that from Chamonix to Zermatt we should have followed the High Level Route along the Pennines, thence over the Saas Grat and the Fletschhorn to Simplon and along the Lepontines, but I had already in former years travelled this route, in many parts more than once; I therefore chose an alternative line. Switzerland is traversed from west to east by two great parallel ranges, separated from one another by the long depression of the Rhone valley and its eastward continuation. We might follow either range: the Pennines, Lepontines, etc., on the south or the Oberland on the north. I had always neglected the Oberland. Now was my chance to see something of it. Accordingly we quitted Chamonix over the Buet and crossed the Rhone valley at St. Maurice. Our first peak of the northern range was the Diablerets, followed by the Wildhorn, the Plaine Morte glacier, and a pass to the Gemmi. I found this part of the journey delightful. There were comfortable high resting places between one climb and the next. The weather was fine and the views superb. That from the Diablerets is specially commendable. The passage of the Plaine Morte glacier fulfilled and rewarded a long desired wish. It is like a large high planted snow-lake, almost level, of wonderfully pure snow, prettily rippled. It is very secluded. From most points on its surface you cannot see out to the world beyond. Few climbers visit

it. It is a haunt of solitude, with no trace of the existence of man.

Instead of crossing from the Gemmi inn over the Torrenthorn to Ried I made an excursion to Zermatt in hopes of taking the Gurkhas up the Cervin. Bad weather rendered that impossible, so we climbed the Nordend of Monte Rosa instead and accomplished the ascent in a furious gale—a fine and strenuous experience. From this deviation, returning by the valleys to Ried, we continued the direct line of our journey, pursuing a long glacial traverse through the heart of the Oberland, the longest unbroken snow-traverse in the Alps. It presents no difficulties, and is a mere trudge over *névés* and glaciers, but it commands scenery continuously splendid, and leads always far away from the haunts of men. Three passes have to be crossed in succession : the Lötschenlücke, the Grünhornlücke, and the Oberaarjoch. The terminal hotels are at Ried and on the Grimsel Pass. Between the first pass and the second the way lies across the upper level of the Aletsch glacier and along two of its tributaries—the largest glacier-basin in the Alps. We spent two nights at the Concordia hut, near where the great glacier collects together its tributaries to form its main body. The intervening fine day was devoted to an ascent of the Jungfrau. We had intended on the morrow to climb the Finsteraarhorn *en route*, but weather prevented; so passing round its foot we found the Oberaarjoch in an oncoming storm which accompanied us to the Grimsel and there imprisoned us for a day.

*Photo: Spencer.*

THE EIGER AND WETTERHORN AT DAWN, FROM THE BÜTTLASSEN.

The following midnight when the moon shone clearly we held on our way and were high on the *arête* of the Galenstock at sunrise. The whole mechanism of the wonder was clearly displayed. The different coloured lights into which the white rays of the hidden sun were split up in passing through the prism of the atmosphere were visible as spectrum-bands across the western sky. Low down the light was mellow, farther up came a wide band of pink, and above that a band of gold. These dyed zones resembled a curtain, hanging across the sky and slowly lowered as the hidden sun ascended from the night. The lowering curtain as it neared the distant peaks in the south-west first overcame the dead whiteness of their pallor. When the edge of the pink band touched them they glowed with the normal crimson of dawn at the moment of the sun's actual rising upon them. So long as the pink band of the curtain was passing over them in its descent they reflected various shades of that colour. Finally and for a brief interval the gold band rested on them and they glowed like fire till the white light of full day illumined them as the sun soared above the damp bed of atmosphere near the horizon. Had bars of cloud been, as so often, stretched across the east so that the sun alternately hid behind them and shone through their gaps, the continuity of the changes I beheld would have been broken and those intermittent effects of the coming and going of the dawn-glow would have been produced; but the east was perfectly clear and the whole drama of sunrise passed through its phases with unbroken lucidity.

We plunged down a previously unclimbed *couloir* from the ridge of the Galenstock, slipped through a narrow gap in an opposite range of crags, and so by scrambling down another and longer *couloir* reached the Winter glacier. Down it and the valley below a toilsome march ended at Göschenen and its yawning tunnel-mouth.

The Alps of Uri and Glarus had next to be surmounted, chief among them the historical Tödi. They afforded pleasant scenery and interesting though easy expeditions, but Tödi would have nothing to say to us and withdrew into clouds and storm at our approach, so that we had much ado to work round him by passes. The mountains climbed in this part of the journey have left in my mind vaguest memories. Few are the prospects I can recall except well below the snow-level. I remember camping for the night beside the desolate Mutten lake, and the avalanche of sheep that rushed down upon us in hopes of salt, and carried Carrel off his feet. I remember also the interest aroused in me by sight of the huge mountain-fall that overwhelmed the village of Elm in 1881 and the accounts of it given to me by eye-witnesses still living. I also very clearly remember passing through the Martinsloch, a vast natural archway cut right through the ridge of a mountain at some depth below its crest, the only pass I have ever crossed of such a nature; but most of the scenes described in my book, which was written on the spot from day to day, have utterly passed from my memory. When I read my own paragraphs they are like the writing of a total stranger

describing what I might never have beheld. From Ragatz we mounted the easy Scesaplana, an exceptionally fine view-point, whence we saw the sun rise over a vaporous intricacy of clouds and mountains with the pretty Lüner See rippling and laughing at our feet. After that only the Silvretta range intervened between us and Tirol. Our plan had been to climb the Gross Litzner and Piz Buin, but we never even saw either of them or any of their neighbours. We crossed the range indeed by a glacier pass but in so dense a fog that the whole route had to be directed by map and compass, for never could our vision penetrate farther than a few yards in any direction. On August 5th Switzerland was quitted in the Lower Engadin, and only the mountains of Tirol remained to be traversed.

The approach to the Oetzthal glaciers raised pleasing emotions. They had been in sight from all the peaks climbed by us during the Sterzing reading-party of 1874. We then felt but did not like to confess that the Stubai peaks were second-rate compared with these greater neighbours. Now at last I was about to make their acquaintance by crossing over the Weisskugel, their loftiest peak, upwards of 12,000 feet high—a very respectable altitude in Tirol. The approach was by way of the Langtauferer valley and its glaciers which present noble ice-scenery, especially where the Gepatsch *névé* tumbles into the Langtauferer, displaying ice-cliffs impregnable from side to side. Not wishing to carry our packs over the peak we made a détour to leave them at a convenient spot,

otherwise we should have followed the north *arête* throughout. The morning was beautiful. Softly undulating fields of snow surrounded us, breaking into mazes of *sérac* with tops brushed by the sun. Mist-filled, sparkling air manifested the complex curvatures of the whitest snow-field. A steep snow-slope led to the north *arête* and so to the top. The view was the finest of the whole summer from the top of a peak, not for wide comprehension but for delicacy of atmospheric effect and richness of unusual colour. Sunward the air was full of light; in the opposite direction it was a purple ocean with peaks submerged like coral reefs, and soft clouds floating like creatures of the sea. The east face invited us to descend. Usually it must be a sheet of ice or dangerous avalanche snow. This day it was of admirable texture, and we could tread down it as down a ladder, marvelling how snow could adhere to such a slope. Presently the glorious weather changed, but we reached Vent just in time to escape the downpour, which continued for thirty-six hours.

In 1874 the Zuckerhütl had been the unattained goal of our ambition. I had decided at long last to climb it this year on the way to Sterzing. To that end we spent a night in a log-inn on the Windbach Alp; but the next day seemed hopeless and we were constrained the day following to push forth into fog and rain and to feel our way by help of the compass over the dividing ridge and down our old friend the Uebelthal glacier. The pass was successfully found, but the snow-field on the other side sloped away into mere nebula. We laid a course for the Müller hut with

such success that when it emerged from the fog we were within a dozen yards of its front door. Thence to Sterzing was but a retracing of my steps of twenty years before. I marked many changes. The glacier had greatly sunken and retreated. Excellent paths had been made and no less than three huts built, while an hotel was a-building on an island of rock at the foot of the Wilder Freiger. It gave me great joy to descend through the well-remembered Ridnaun valley and to find how much more keenly I was now capable of appreciating its simple charms of woodland, meadows and running waters than before, when all my heart was set upon the snows and the peaks rising out of them.

At Brennerbad, near the summit of the Brenner Pass, Fitzgerald and his guides finally left me, and I went forward alone with the Gurkhas. Two days' tramp over familiar ground took us to the hut on the Hochfeiler, highest of the Zillerthal Alps, which I had climbed in clouds in 1874. I was still sore at not having seen the view and planned to climb it again. A violent storm raged all night and buried the base of the hut deep in snow, but, the sun coming out, we adventured forth and waded knee-deep up to the south-west *arête*. Ten minutes below the top we came into full contact with a gale of north wind, so violent and cold as to be unendurable without arctic clothing. There was nothing for it but swift descent southward, over the Weisszintjoch, and thence by good paths and easy passes toward the Gross Venediger.

A few days later we gained the Kürsinger hut, high

on the flank of that mountain, after racing to escape an uprising storm. It shook its black ægis over us as we gained the desired shelter, and there we were weatherbound for four nights and three days. On the fourth, in continuing fog, we set forth out of sheer restlessness and crossed the Venediger to Windisch Matrei, seeing nothing on the high levels save whirling spouts of snow and coiled writhings of cloud. It rained again all night. Surely the summer of 1894 must have been of exceptionally evil disposition! The grass-pass to Kals could be negotiated in any weather. Unfortunately I lost the Gurkhas on the way, and they walked up and down all sorts of valleys looking for me before we came together next morning at the Stüdl hut beneath the Gross Glockner. A half-day's rest for them was a necessity. In the afternoon we mounted the easy ascent to the upper hut which stands on the highest shoulder of the peak, the sun at last consenting to shine, though with no aspect of bringing settled weather. Some thirty persons occupied the hut and were well fed by its servants. We slept together in a long row on mattresses that were comfortable enough, and all went forth next morning in the rosy flare of dawn. Just before sunrise the jagged eastern horizon blazed with a narrow outline of fire. Over North Italy hill and vale still slept beneath a violet pall. Our fellow-climbers were not in good condition. We were as hard as nails. We let them all start, ate our breakfast, then ran to the summit in thirty-five minutes and were the first upon it. Only the traverse along the *arête* from the lower to the higher

point ever presented any difficulties. They have all been removed by blasted steps and an iron railing!

Two more peaks remained to be climbed, the Sonnblick (on whose summit there is a house) and the Ankogel, last of the snowy Alps. They offer dull climbs and appeared to me to command only moderate views. By this time, however, I was getting stale. I was tired of the bad weather. I had seen enough for one summer. The whole scrambling and travelling business had lost its charm. Romance had vanished. Our work seemed almost like a trade. I turned away from the Ankogel with relief, hastened to the flesh-pots of Wildbad Gastein, lost and again recovered the Gurkhas, and hastened back with them to London as fast as express trains would carry us. Bruce happened to be on the doorstep of my house as we drove up and the Gurkhas fell into his arms.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE FIRST CROSSING OF SPITSBERGEN

IN 1894 a paper describing the ascent of a hill in Spitsbergen was sent to me as editor for the time being of the "Alpine Journal." Attention thus directed toward the north induced further investigations. Were there other mountains, ranges of mountains, in the same arctic island? Had they been explored, mapped, climbed? I was impelled to read the literature of arctic exploration and became interested in the subject. Soon afterward, early one winter morning, I was riding along the bank of the Serpentine in Hyde Park. It was misty and the water had been frozen over. The sheet of ice was broken up and the sun was penetrating the mist and glittering on the ice. The tender evanescent beauty of the scene took sudden possession of me. Thus, perhaps, on a grander scale might arctic visions fashion themselves. At that moment the fates decided for me the two expeditions carried out in 1896 and 1897.

Some eighteen months after that morning in the Park the party I had organised was on board a steamer approaching the west coast of Spitsbergen. The conditions resembled those of that winter day in London. There was the same mist, the same sunshine struggling through, and the same broken ice, but now larger in scale and floating on an ocean. The impression

received was of an extreme tenderness and delicacy. The whiteness of the ice-floes and larger masses (none of them large enough to be called bergs) was intensified by shimmering streaks and shadows of transparent blues, many shaded. The water rippled; sunshine glanced back from diamond points of ice or flashed from wavelets. Thus the frozen north opened its portals of beauty, and thus another new world invited the pilgrim to enter and find perhaps at last the entirely satisfying vision. Later on the majesty of the north revealed itself to us. We saw great icebergs fall into the sea; we encountered storm in the midst of grandeur; we came among precipitous rocks and huge frozen solitudes; but as I look back upon the experience of two long seasons it is the tenderness and delicacy of arctic beauty that remains its greatest and most abiding charm.

After two days' ploughing through the floating ice within deeply penetrating Ice Sound we landed on a low spit that protects the secluded harbour of Advent Bay. There we set up our tents, landed our stores, and established our base-camp. It is a dreary site and was for us intensely disappointing. The hills around are of unimpressive form, rising out of wide flats, then snow-covered and featureless, later brown expanses of bog. Only northward across the Sound is there any stretch of mountain and glacier of notable character, and the hills there are too far away to be more than generally impressive. Our first business was to penetrate into the unknown interior of the island and force a way across its untraversed solitudes to the east coast

and back. Many scientific expeditions had explored the coastal regions of Spitsbergen, but no published account gave any sort of true idea of the nature of the surface of the land. Its geological structure had been investigated, but little was recorded about the land-forms and practically nothing about the circumstances which would affect and decide the movements of a traveller. Thus we arrived with an entirely unsuitable equipment, and were about to launch forth on a journey at the very worst time of year for its accomplishment. We were bound to traverse a series of flat, mainly wide valleys, filled right across with softening bog covered by melting snow. We had brought ponies and arctic sledges for transport—a job for which they were unfit. The bog was a compound of mud and sharp-edged stones, split by frost. The ponies sank up to their bellies in the stiff compound and had to be dug out time and again in every march. The stones rasped the sledge-runners, which had to be frequently mended or replaced. We also sank in at every step, and the toil of advance was extreme.

My sketch-survey, made as we went along, was complicated by the bad weather. Hill summits were generally clouded, and a second sight of the same point was seldom obtainable, for I could not await clearances. Moreover, the compass proved unreliable. Mountains full of iron-ore deflected the needle, while observations for true bearing when most needed were denied by the generally hidden sun.

Nevertheless, with Gregory and Garwood (both now professors and F.R.S.) I forged ahead up the

valley at the back of Advent Bay, and round with its bending to a low pass which led us into the greater valley ending at Sassen Bay—the valley up which we should have started had ice conditions permitted us to land at its mouth. We made many side expeditions into the hills to right and left, and one long reconnaissance over to the wide and far-extending valley that leads inland from the head of Bell Sound. That was a most fatiguing adventure which fell to the lot of Garwood and me. On looking back this expedition and the ascent of Aconcagua are remembered as the most fatiguing experiences of my wandering life.

We left camp after noon and worked up a side valley behind it, wading in snow from the start, but rarely able to take a step or two on rotten rock. When the valley forked we took the directer branch, and thus in a few hours reached a pass. Cloud covered us and there was no view in any direction. The descent was worse than the climb. For a long distance the snow was so soft that we had to crawl gingerly over it on all fours. A walker sank into it up to the waist, and each step involved climbing out of a hole and falling into another. We came down a glacier and off its bulging foot on to a painful region of snow-bogs, pools of snow saturated with water, streams in ice-gullies, and the like. I fell up to the neck and out of my depth into a pool of saturated snow, and was drenched to the skin with icy water. It mattered the less because I was already wet to the waist. By slow degrees we entered a valley leading in the desired direction. As we advanced conditions improved a

little. After some ten hours of this exhausting labour we were fairly done up. Finding at last a small patch of dryish ground a little sheltered by banks from the cold wind, we halted for a few hours' rest, lying side by side, wet to the skin and wrapped only in a mackintosh. Then it rained, cold, freezing rain. We could not sleep. On starting again, ten minutes' walk brought us out into the great valley we had come to see, and rewarded us with a remarkable view down to Bell Sound and the sea in one direction and far up toward the east coast in the other. A pall of cloud covered the sky. All was white desolation upon land and grey gloom on the sea. The return was adventured by a parallel valley and another pass. The difficulties of the way did not diminish. It became more and more painful to make the needed observations for the sketch survey; but work that has to be done is done. Feet sodden for hours waxed tender. Backs protested against their loads. About twenty-four hours from starting the second pass was reached. Far in the distance we could just identify the site of our camp, which we must reach or die. Waist-deep in snow we waded down toward a flat white area. It proved to be an untraversable lake of snow-slush. It was turned with difficulty by wading one stream after another of a nameless compound, neither solid nor liquid, neither ice, water, nor snow, but possessing the wetness of water, the coldness of ice, and while offering no support to the tread opposing a massive obstruction to the advancing foot. Below the slush-lake came another, and then the valley floor with its bogs, its

snow-beds, and its streams to wade. Six hours from the second pass we regained our camp in a condition bordering on complete exhaustion. I have made expeditions much longer than this in point of time, but none in which labour so severe had to be so continuously maintained over so many hours.

Arrived in the main Sassendal the way toward the east coast was plain to see for some distance. We had but to mount the left bank of the valley to the foot of the hill that blocked it. The going was fairly good—boggy ground, of course, many streams to be waded and the sledges to be carried over each. The scenery was utterly tame—a straight valley with hills on either hand, like the Downs, the bluffs of a plateau. Ahead was a glacier, and behind was the bay with some rather striking cliffs beyond. From the bluffs, which we climbed at one or two points, the views were more remarkable and comprehensive. One such oversight commanding the most recondite part of the heart of the island may be alluded to. Observe that the main island of Spitsbergen, a shield-shaped mass, is divided naturally into three regions, north, central and south. The first and last are thoroughly arctic in character. They consist of a heavy glacial mantle with mountain ranges thrusting through. The central portion is quite different. The Gulf Stream impinges on its west coast and floods the deep sounds that penetrate far into the interior. The whole of this region was once a table-land built up of structurally weak rocks. This table-land has been cut down into deep, boggy valleys and rounded hills or remnants of plateau,

not unlike the South Downs in form. Snow lingers on the heights or forms glaciers at the heads of valleys, but large areas become snow-free in summer, and the valleys and slopes, though not grassy, bear sheets of flowering plants and brightly coloured mosses. There is food for such vast herds of reindeer as wandered all over the country before whalers and miscellaneous hunters came up and ruthlessly destroyed them. Now it is only in the less accessible valleys that reindeer can maintain themselves. The view in question was over this remotest part of the interior. It was as desolate a prospect as the imagination can picture. All the mountain forms were rounded; all the valleys were troughs. Clouds trailed about or spun up like writhing genii from the depths. Everything looked sodden. The very hill-sides appeared to be, as in fact they are, sliding down into the depths. There were mud-slides upon the slopes. Mud-laden rivers sought the sea. Frost and thaw were obviously carrying all before them with a rapidity undreamt of by dwellers in temperate regions. The big valley was fed by side valleys which subdivided and re-subdivided. We looked down upon a perfect maze of trenches. All were forlorn; all, like the whole island, utterly uninhabited. Into most of them man had never penetrated. From the beginning of the world they had been solitary. Farther away were beauties enough—the lovely fjord framed in rocky peaks and great glaciers, with all the hills steeped in a purple that no dye can simulate. There the sun shone on snow and clouds, making the glaciers gay and sparkling on the water; but

here in this central region all was fog and damp and gloom.

We had intended to climb on to the glacier at the head of the Sassendal and cross over it to the east coast, but on approach access to it seemed difficult, and an unexpected valley opened out leading far in the direction of our goal. So we turned up it and wandered on, conditions for a while improving. Other troubles were in store. A glacier not many years ago had evidently come down a side valley and blocked the main depression up which we were advancing. Glaciers in Spitsbergen advance and retreat suddenly. One year a valley is open from end to end. Ten years later it is barred right across by the foot of a glacier from a tributary glen which will oppose a wall of ice two or three hundred feet high in the way of a traveller. This particular side-glacier had come and gone, but it had left the floor of our valley in a parlous state with moraine heaps and mounds of semi-fossil ice and a tortured and intricately meandering torrent in a difficult gorge. This rough-and-tumble area was a mile or more long and took the best part of a day to pass with ponies and sledges. Then came the worst stretch of bog we had encountered, and then, suddenly, a great wall of ice such as I have above described barring our way. We camped at the foot of it on a wretched site where tent and baggage were presently invaded by an all-penetrating mud. It seemed as though the east coast would never appear. Climbing the hill above camp the moment it was pitched, I rose above the ice-wall, which proved to be the side of the end of a great glacier.

When at last I could look over it and beyond—lo! the eastern sea with Edge Island rising out of it and the ice-pack stretching away to a remote and clear horizon. I yelled down to my friends in camp, then climbed higher and higher and saw to ever greater distances. Aghard Bay just beyond the glacier was sparkling in sunlight and dotted over with speckles and streaks of ice. The water was blue; blue, too, were the hills of Edge Island, and presently purple; the remotest of them ablaze with flushes of yellow light. Up and up I went, leaning against a gale till all the nearer hills were disclosed, domes of snow from which the big glacier descended. The limb of a rainbow was standing upon the ice. It was a view not merely worth seeing, but well worth having come to see. I shall never forget it. Next day we crossed the glacier to the east coast, spent some hours there, and returned. We named our pass the Ivory Gate.* Four days later we were back by the shore of Sassen Bay, Ice Sound. The first crossing of Spitsbergen was accomplished.

For some time longer we continued the exploration of this central area, working back by land toward Advent Bay and climbing various heights, often commanding beautiful views over Ice Sound and beyond, but enough has been said to indicate the character of our experiences. While encamped beside the sound,

* Sunt geminae somni portae, quarum altera fertur
Cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris;
Altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,
Sed falsa ad coelum mittunt insomnia manes.
VIRGIL, ÆNEID VI. 893.

waiting for a belated boat, I wrote as follows on a piece of paper: "Thrown into Sassen Bay, Ice Fjord, Spitsbergen, on July 26, 1896, by me. If found please give information to the Royal Geographical Society, London." I signed it, enclosed it in a bottle, and cast it far into the water. That fragment of paper lies before me as I write. It was picked up in April, 1906, two miles from land not far north of Vesteraalen, Norway, by a fisherman, who sent it to me.

We had had enough of mud-floundering and pony-driving over unsuitable ground. The proper time to explore these valleys is before the summer thaw sets in, while the earth is still hard and sledges can be drawn over frozen snow. The little steamer I had hired met our reunited party at Advent Bay, and glad we were to embark upon it, our purpose being to visit all the accessible coast-region round to the north and see where profitable inland investigations might be made in future to determine the mountain-structure of the island.

In blustery weather we steamed away from Advent Point, leaving the melancholy land behind with its bleak purple shores sloping up to hills all white with new-fallen snow and roofed with cloud. Bleared gleams of misty sunlight cast an added pallor on patches of the view. The wind howled and rain drove in our faces as we passed out of Ice Sound and headed for the long narrow channel that divides the sunken mountain range, King Charles Foreland, from the mainland. The cloud-roof hid the peaks as we passed the mouths of gloomy valleys and the bases of massive buttresses. Glaciers presently came down to the water on both

sides. Grey clouds seemed to be walking on the sea on columnar limbs of falling snow, thick and heavy. Kings and Cross Bays held each its separate storm. We did not enter them, but forged northward in the tumbling sea past the Seven Icebergs, which are really sea-fronting glaciers, past the mouth of Magdalena Bay, and so through the South Gat into the haven at the north-west corner of Spitsbergen, which was the prosperous and, in summer, populous base of the Dutch whale-fishery in the seventeenth century. We came to anchor in the passage between Danes and Amsterdam Islands, just off the cove where Andrée's balloon-house was set up and his inflated balloon was awaiting a favourable south wind to float it over the North Pole. I landed and visited the place and the man. He showed me his airship and explained his plans. Weather prevented his attempt this year, but in 1897 he ascended and was never heard of again. On the other shore we visited the last remnants of Smeerenburg (Blubbertown), the old Dutch settlement, mainly marked by graves. There was a feeling as of ancient tragedies in the air. I remembered many a story of winterings and death in this very place—a palace of death, grandly hedged about by massive mountains of archæan rock, blasted by almost ceaseless storm, and hidden in arctic night for half the year. Large glacier fronts protruded into the sea; a pallid white ice-blink gleamed in the mist over the inland-ice. All around was grey—grey water, grey rocks, grey sky, save for faint blue breaks in the glacier-cliffs and one incredibly blue stranded ice-castle, whose colour, like a rich note

of music, seemed to throb in and through the soft harmony of greys.

Northward we steamed to find the edge of the polar ice-pack, past Foul Point and Vogelsang, Cloven Cliff and the Norways—rock islands famous in arctic adventure. Many are the years when the pack comes hard down upon this northern shore and remains there, blocking all eastward passage. Fortune favoured us. The edge of the pack was in 80° 13′, and there was open water for our advance. A wonderful sight is the ice-pack, so broad, so flat apparently, so deathlike still. Go within it and you will find that it is alive and moving and all split up and divided by lanes or leads of water. We lay off it for a little while, then Eastward ho! along the edge of it and further north as it bent away to 80° 28′ off Verlegen Hook. Drift ice in closely assembled multitude of fragments had to be negotiated—a very beautiful experience because of the variety and grace of the floating pieces which mimicked the forms of natural objects. The blue of their hollows and sea-washed fronts was a multifold delight. Seals slept on them as on beds. After passing the mouth of Hinloopen Strait we held on north-eastward, with the coast of North-East-Land about ten miles away, and its low-domed white interior, which Nordenskjöld crossed, just visible under its cloud-cap. Black cliffs and rocks alone stood out from the whiteness of this desolate land. The Seven Islands were our next aim, not to land on them, but if possible to pass them and get round yet farther; but it was not to be. When we came up with them they were packed

about with ice, and farther advance was not possible. We had, however, been lucky enough. Many a well-found arctic expedition, with a year or two at its disposal, had failed to reach as far. Lamont, in years of arctic yachting and after many attempts, never penetrated along the north coast. We landed on Walden Island and viewed the remains of a hut built by a wrecked arctic expedition—Wellman's. From the highest point we looked far over the sea, ice-pack, and land—a memorable view beneath the lifted cloud-roof. The Seven Islands displayed the lonely grandeur of their weather-beaten, snow-draped flanks. The crags of North-East-Land and its island outliers fronted the polar sea with apparently indomitable rocks. An ice-blink answered for the pack binding the sea. Northward the infinite plain stretched away and away, who could say how far or what including?

There was no time to waste, as the pack was coming down on Verlegen Hook and might cut us off. We decided to try and escape southward down Hinloopen Strait. The sea became utterly calm, the air warmer and softer. It was like a winter's day at home. Rain-clouds swept their besoms over land and sea, and snow flurries came and passed like April showers. A glacier front some twenty-five miles long edged the first reach of the long strait. We marvelled at the varied wonders of its cliff as we looked into blue tunnels and grottoes or watched the bold spires and clefts if haply, as several times occurred, we might behold the glacier calve and great masses fall from it into the sea. Slowly we forged our way against a

*Photo: Prof. Garwood.*

IN THE HEART OF SPITSBERGEN.

powerful tide, with North-East-Land always on our left, its ice-sheet delicately sloping up into softest mist and blanched ice-blink over all. The view broadened down the low-sided strait; black islands sharply edged in front, but all else utterly vague and evanescent.

Beyond Cape Torell came the wider sea, and there was no ice-blink ahead. Right and left the broad, cold blare of light lay low along the heavens, but southward it mellowed away. Then we came among great masses of floating ice, true icebergs, small in comparison with those that calve off Greenland and are seen by Atlantic passengers, trifling snowballs if set against the huge icefloes of the Antarctic, but compared with man things great and impressive. The largest come from the south-eastern end of the inland ice of North-East-Land, and are as big as the hulls of considerable ships. They take every fantastic form and are intricate with fairy hollows and recesses, jutting towers and overhanging projections. All the hollows are blue and all the surfaces not washed by the sea are white. We saw walruses resting on them; seals raised their man-like heads and shoulders to gaze at us out of the smooth, grey sea. Here was arctic beauty to perfection. Who could sleep with such wonders revealed anew every hour? On and on we went with rising hopes, but a southward exit was not to be ours. We turned aside to try a passage through Heley Sound, which divides Barents Island from the main land, but that also was closed. Returning some distance we tried farther to the eastward, following the edge of the pack. On one side was ever the calm sea with

the icebergs floating in it, on the other the broad, silent ice-sheet, blue-edged, cracked here and there, and here and there raised into long high ridges of piled blue and white masses where two floes had been driven together and "screwed" their tortured edges up into a splintered chaos. On we ran eastward. Barents and Edge Islands sank beneath the horizon; North-East-Land was all but gone. Then a new land emerged farther east—the seldom seen and very rarely visited Wiche Islands, at that time still unexplored. A dim hope arose that we might land on them first among explorers, but it was soon extinguished. The pack enveloped them.

Our coal was running low; we had barely enough to reach Andrée's ship for a further supply and could not afford to delay an hour. Back, therefore, we returned by the way we had come over the hundred and twenty-five miles from Verlegen Hook; back with our hearts in our throats, fearing lest the passage might be closed round that point also and we shut off from escape in any direction. Here was a fine chance for sleep. We rounded the fatal point and proceeded close along the north coast, which we had not beheld as we came, following the edge of the pack. We passed Treurenburg Bay, where French frigates overwhelmed the Dutch whalers in a sea-fight long ago, and where, in Hecla Cove, Parry wintered. As Wijde Bay opened we saw into Mossel Bay, a wintering-place of Nordenskjöld. The usual cloud-roof rested on the mountains behind Grey Hook and these were white down to the sea with new-fallen snow. Skirts of fog

trailed out from every bay and inlet, but a brighter pallor spread over the southern sky. Cold, steely gleams came and went in this place and that. Seals rising and diving made rings on the calm water. Busy bird-flocks skimmed the surface, guillemots with fish in their mouths hurrying back to their young, little auks forever gay, fulmar petrels always grave, and the many feathered squadrons of the north.

The gateway of the frozen east thus safely passed, we took stock of our coal and ventured into Wijde Bay, that deep sound which runs so far inland from the north coast. Grand scenery presently replaced the somewhat uninteresting northern reach. Hill-ranges enclose it along either bank. It is the best part of a degree of latitude in length and several miles wide. The biggest mountains in Spitsbergen look down upon its inmost eastern shore, but alas! they were hidden. We were to behold them from the inland ice twelve months later. Down this long avenue we steamed, past headlands and the mouths of valleys and the crescent-fronts of glaciers, rising like walls of marble and turquoise out of the dark surface of the sound. The boat was stopped over against one of these, just as the sunshine burst through on the splintered ice-cliff and calm water, leaving in gloom the red riven crags behind. Stillness reigned. Seals peeped forth. Fulmar petrels were floating near at hand. Clouds on the snow-peaks divided, showing white ridges and sharp summits. A much-branching reindeer-valley opening opposite revealed in its remotest depth a purple of incredible richness.

Where the sound divides we turned up its western branch and presently landed on its western shore. Had we been properly equipped a long march would have taken us southward over a low pass to the head of Dickson Bay (a branch of Ice Sound) which our companion Trevor-Battye had explored a few weeks before. But we had done with land-travel. After a few hours' halt, all were aboard again, and when I awoke we were anchored off Andrée's balloon-station and taking in coal. Thence returning southward we looked into Magdalena and Kings Bays, passed the mouth of Ice Sound and ran into Bell Sound, the site nowadays of industrial activity in connection with its coal and iron deposits, for which a great future is predicted. Little thought we then of such matters, but only of penetrating to the head of the Low Sound branch in order to link up my sketch-survey, made on that horrible expedition with Garwood, with fixed points on the map. The mouth of the Sound is almost blocked by a long narrow island of rock. The exiguous opening offers a dangerous piece of navigation. A boiling tide sweeping through it carried us like a cork in a mill-race. We were spun round and cast this way and that by eddies or domes of water surging up from below; but it was soon over. The fjord within was absolutely calm. Our emergence was made at slack tide. This was our last adventure. We returned to the base-camp, packed up our baggage and collections, and were carried to Hammerfest just in time to see Nansen land from his wonderful transpolar voyage in the *Fram*. Ours had been a journey full of

toil and discomfort but precious in the gifts of the high gods. They hedged themselves about with storm and darkness, but within the pale they opened the halls of their secret palaces to the wanderers and summoned them by winged messengers. They shed mysterious and wonderful lights upon their path, and led them into temples of ivory and marble and gold. The glamour of the old world, the world of saga and song and of the great dead, was revealed to them, and they came back to the cities of men as with veiled heads so that none could know of the glory from which they returned.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE INLAND ICE OF SPITSBERGEN

EARLY in the following summer (1897) Garwood and I, with two Norwegian sailors, landed from our whale-boat on the shore far up Klaas Billen Bay, near the sea-front of the Nordenskjöld glacier. The day of our arrival was that on which Andrée went up in his balloon and disappeared for ever from the sight of men. Klaas Billen Bay is a northern branch of Ice Sound, and you can see across to it from the usual landing-spit at Advent Point. Our purpose was to drag our sledges up the glacier and on to the high region of snowfields covering the whole interior of the eastern part of Spitsbergen north of Ice Sound. The expedition was very interesting, but far surpassed in delight by what followed, and may be dealt with briefly. The whole journey is fully described in my book, "With Ski and Sledge over Arctic Glaciers." (London. 1898). It was as delightful as it was interesting to sit and watch the noble sea-washed glacier-front in all the wealth of its colouring and the wonder of its form, often barred across with sunlight and shadow, throwing into relief this and the other icy pinnacle above some blue wall or gloomy cavern. Toward half-tide the ice cliff fired great guns along all its battlemented front in quick succession. To be gazing in the right direction at the moment of a big

fall was sheer good luck. Thus once I saw a monster pinnacle come thundering down. First, a few fragments were crushed to right and left near its base; then the whole tower sank vertically, smashing up within as it fell; at last, grandly bending over, it shot forward into the bay in a thousand fragments great and small. These dinged and splashed the water into a mound of spray, perhaps a hundred feet high. Before coming to rest they would heave and roll about for a while, lifting the water upon their flanks and shaking it off in cascades till they lay still or slowly floated away among countless fellows fallen before. Meanwhile the circling waves thus generated would spread and break around, hurling the floating blocks against one another, disturbing the balance of some, toppling them over or splitting them up, and thus starting smaller intersecting rings. The widening undulations could be traced afar off by the stately courtesy of the rocking icebergs. Finally, the great breakers would come swishing along the shore, louder and louder as they approached, till they passed close by the tent and washed up to where our whale-boat was lying, hauled just beyond their reach. Between the falls and their sequence of sounds silence was only broken by the ceaseless murmur of the bay and the gentle soughing of the wind.

Two days of very severe labour carried our camp to a height of 1,500 feet, at the head of the steep tongue of the glacier. There was a mountain to east and west of us, the slope we had ascended to the south, and the vast expanse of snowfields to the north.

Storm kept us stationary for one day, then for two days we journeyed northward, always uphill, some fifteen miles, finally camping at a height of nearly 3,000 feet. A dense fog had enshrouded us all the time. Within it there was nothing, absolutely nothing to be seen save ourselves and our sledges. Fog above and around and snow below formed one uniform sphere of whiteness. I could see my feet and legs, but apparently standing upon nothing. The sledges seemed to lie on the same fog that enveloped them. One could feel the snow, but one could not see that it was aught but fog. The space between my ski was as light as the zenith. As Peary says, we were blind with wide-open eyes. We advanced, hour after hour, approaching nebula and leaving nebula behind. The effect of the storm, the fog, and the generally unusual surroundings so scared one of our hardy Norsemen that he became utterly useless and ill. When we pitched camp he lay in his tent and groaned, becoming quite hysterical and swelling up in his body. We thought he was going to die, but it was mere funk. For twelve hours a severe storm raged. The tents were buried out of sight of one another in new snow, but afterward the sky cleared, and we had a wonderful view from the summit of a snow-dome about a mile from camp. Fog unfortunately hid the lower levels. Had it lifted, we should have looked down on to the head of the east branch of Wijde Bay and should have been able correctly to locate a group of high and pointed rock-peaks which appeared in the north and have since been proved to be the highest in Spits-

bergen, rising, I believe, to an altitude of about 7,000 feet. All that we could see was the hollow in which the bay and the glacier at the head of it lie, the latter dropping away from where we stood. Eastward a vast extent of snowfields and glaciers in white valleys stretched down to the margin of Wybe Jans Water and Olga Strait. One more march would have solved many problems, but our fool of a sailor would not advance, and could neither be left behind nor carried. We were forced to return, but our going was now in clear weather and we could keep along the watershed, gently downward sloping. High in the limpid air floated a dark blue roof of soft cloud, resting on skyey walls of marvellous colours, with bars of stratus reflecting golden sunlight. Under the hidden sun in the north hung a reticulated web of gold and Tyrian purple, through which shafts of tender light drooped like eyelashes upon the snow. The *névé* swept away on all sides in gentle curves and domes, here greyish-white with purple shadows, there bluish-grey and strewn with carpets of sunshine. Such rocks as emerged were rich in tints, ruddy or orange, enforced by the lustrous atmosphere. There was none of that sharp contrast of dark and white that strikes a superficial observer in Alpine views. This panorama was all colour, harmonious without rift and rich without monotony. At midnight the cloud-roof opened in the north and a flood of sunshine fell around us—a veritable transfiguration and thrilling glory which cannot be told. Entranced with beauty, we marched on and on, as in boundless space, with a sense of free-

dom and a joy in the ownership of the whole universe —emotions that best arise in the great clean places of the earth, where nothing lives and nothing grows, the great deserts and the wide snowfields. Green country by comparison is mildewed land. Another day of like beauty followed before we had to plunge again into storm and fog, and thus, after eight days aloft, return to our boat on the shore of the bay by the glacier's foot.

Five days later, carried by a little steamer, we landed at the head of Kings Bay, and formed a base camp close to the end of the seven miles wide ice-cliff wherewith the Kings Glacier terminates all along the eastern margin of this arm of the sea. Magdalena Bay is called the Gem of Arctic scenery, but Kings and Cross Bays, in my opinion, far surpass it. I shall not attempt to describe them. It was not a bay we came to investigate, nor the outcrop of excellent coal in its south shore, but the great glacier and the mountains beyond. From an elevation near camp the glacier was widely displayed back to its radiating snowfields. Its lower part, which flows over buried rock-islands, is broken into a tumult of crevasses and *séracs*. Varying illumination on this splintered area set fancy at play. Sometimes the broken ice looked like an innumerable multitude of white-robed penitents, sometimes like a tented camp, sometimes like a frozen cataract. Its suggestiveness was boundless, its beauty distinguished. Its terminal cliff was worthily framed between mountains with shattered ridges, steep *couloirs*, and high-perched glaciers caught on ledges

or steeply sweeping down to join the main ice-river. Farther back, where the broken region ended, smoother and ever-widening stretches led away toward the group of Dolomite mountains, so prominent from the sea, which the old whalers named the Three Crowns. This group divides the snowfield into two main arms. One, rising directly south-eastward in a straight line from the bay, leads to a pass and beyond it, in a right line, down to Ice Sound. We named this the Kings Highway. The other, and much broader branch, the Crowns Glacier, bending round to the north and continually widening, culminates in an area of low, broad snow-domes, whence an important valley drops to Wood Bay in the north coast.

The plan we immediately formed was to mount first to the Highway Pass (2,500 feet), and then to explore the Crowns. To reach the former was hard work for four days. In the first we had to carry everything across broken ice and moraines. In the second we must haul the sledges over a wavy ice-surface, tugging them up short steep slopes and checking them down successive inclines. They often knocked us over and oftener bruised us in their wayward descents. Wave followed wave about twenty yards apart, and the work was heart-breaking. The third stage was over waterlogged snow, into which we sank, ski, sledges, and all. Saturated to the knees in freezing water, we had to labour excessively to drag our burdens against the resistance of the unpleasant compound. There were also many wide streams on the ice to be crossed. At last we gained

the dry *névé* above, and easily completed the ascent on a day of perfect weather, which was destined to continue. The sun, indeed, was quite hot, and we gladly shed our warm and heavy wraps. The warmth changed the aspect of the snow-surface. In frost it sparkles in sunlight as though powdered with diamonds. On warm days the diamonds melt away. The white expanse is softened to the eye, and this softening effect is recognised even at great distances. The reader may picture without difficulty the elements of what we beheld when standing in the midst of the white plain of the pass. In front and behind were long straight glaciers in line with one another, hedged in on either hand by a range of snowy peaks, domes, rock-needles, and pyramids of varied form. Westward we looked down to Kings Bay and away out to sea; eastward down to Ice Sound and straight across it to Advent Bay. This, then, was the pass we had so often looked up at from our base camp in the preceding year. All the muddy region of our former toils must be in sight from the pass, but was enveloped in the fog that seems generally to haunt it. The impression left upon me by the view was like that from the Hispar Pass, but the many wonderful sights that swiftly followed have blunted recollection.

After a day or two spent in ski-runs from the pass we bent away to explore the Crowns group. The week thus occupied was richer in sights of natural beauty beheld under almost perfect conditions than any spell of time I can remember. From Kings Bay the Three Crowns look like a complete group, but

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THE THREE CROWNS AND KINGS BAY, FROM THE DIADEM, SPITSBERGEN. *Photo: Prof. Garwood.*

they are only the outliers of other and higher mountains—the Pretender, the Exile, the Diadem, and so forth. We climbed several of these. Our first camp was pitched in an enchanted hour. Fog filled the bays and covered the lowest levels, but all else proclaimed the glory of the sun. There is nothing more beautiful than a sunlit sea-fog beheld from above. Its whiteness makes purest snow grey. It moves so gracefully, gliding inland with outstretched arms or casting off islands that wander fitfully. Enchanting to look upon are these sea-fairies. They came up boldly at first, then faltered, and turned back to remain among the *séracs* and crevasses. Only a few floated up the glacier or slumbered as bright islands in hollow places. Faint beds of variously transparent vapour, horizontally stratified, barred the craggy mountains of Cross Bay. We were at the singing level of the ice, where waters trickle and tinkle in tiny ice-cracks, ripple in rivulets, roar in *moulins*, and hum in the faint base of remoter torrents. It is on inclines that these sounds arise. The snow-bogs are silent. This evening the waters were full of music. Birds in strong flight swept by on softly-beating wings. The air was absolutely still. I sat alone in the tent door intoxicated with delight. At such times Nature gathers her lover into herself, transforming his self-consciousness into consciousness of her. The landscape becomes the visible garment of a great personality whereof he himself is a part. Ceasing to think, while Nature addresses him through every sense, he receives direct inspiration from her. The

passage of time is forgotten in such *nirvana*, and bliss is approximated if not attained.

The cliff-face of the Pretender, 2,000 feet clear, looked down upon our camp. Its foundations are a contorted overhanging mass of ruddy archæan rocks, splashed with golden lichen and lined by grassy ledges whereon birds nest. Green sandstone builds the next storey, then a dark red stratum, both with sloping profile. The top is a cap of pink dolomite, horizontally stratified. This rose-pink cliff in the wonderful air, with its level beds of orange and other tints like courses of masonry, is an object of rarest beauty, the highest note of the rich chord of colour presented by this mountain-face. The whole cliff is full of the nests of birds: fulmar petrels on the lower ledges, grave, reverend, and silent; higher up, merry little awks sitting close together in rows sunning their white bosoms; on every jutting pinnacle a glaucous gull ever on the watch. Stone-avalanches falling down their normal ruts do not disturb them, but a stray stone unorthodoxly propelled sends them all forth in their hundreds and their thousands, filling the air with protests, the fulmars swooping around, the little awks darting forth horizontally straight out and back, the glaucous gulls leisurely floating away, their white plumage scarcely more solid than the glowing air sustaining their poise.

A scramble up this peak led to a commanding point of view, for it overlooked the whole expansive *névé* of the Crowns Glacier, as it were a marble pavement of three hundred square miles beneath the blue

dome of heaven, spreading away to an undulating outline with remoter snow-plateaux and mountain summits yet farther off. The surface was lined, like the veins of a leaf, by the many-branching channels of its melted waters. Blue shadows toned the white in crevassed areas. Everywhere the delicate undulation, by varying the amount of light reflected to the eye, produced a tender play of tone within narrow limits from brightest to darkest. I have called it a pavement, but it was visibly a flowing stream, not a stagnant accumulation, the curves of flow plain to see. Thus a sense of weight and volume was added to the effect of boundless expanse. This noble flood of ice, narrowing between our peaks and the piked crags of the Cross Bay mountains opposite, bent beneath the dazzling sea-mist and so passed out of sight.

The summit of a peak central to this dolomite group commands on all sides a foreground remarkable for colour. The distance everywhere was white—glacier and low-lying sea-mist—but the foreground was filled by the golden Crowns above their purple slopes. All the rock in sight flamed in yellow, orange, purple, or red. The nearer snowfields were patched with sapphire lakes. All Spitsbergen was displayed from this high point. We could even identify the remote Horn Sunds Tind, a hundred miles away, at the southern extremity of the island. The yet higher peaks near Wijde Bay were also beheld. The atmosphere was remarkably clear; not often, I suspect, can such distances be pierced by the sight through the dense and moisture-laden arctic air.

I have said little about the details of the ice scenery of these glaciers of the far north, not because there is little to say, but because there is so much. The glacier at the foot of the Crowns was full of wonders. A striking effect was produced by a blood-red torrent, dyed by the disintegration of local sandstones, flowing in a deep blue-sided trough over the white ice. It was not far from our tents, and I often walked along it, coming thus to the large *moulin* into which it took its final plunge. Not far away was a wide ice-tunnel, which had once been a crevasse full of water. The water had frozen on the surface to the depth of two or three feet before the pool had been partly drained. Lateral pressure narrowing the crevasse had bent the frozen roof into a perfect barrel vault. I climbed through a natural doorway into this grotto and stood upon a ledge. Sunlight glimmered through the crystal roof; the walls were white; the indigo depths of the water formed the floor. We looked into many such fairy palaces.

After a fortnight aloft in this world of wonders we returned to lower levels, plunging beneath the bed of fog, and thus regaining the base camp. The fog was so thin that the sun shone through gaps in it upon the glacier's terminal cliff, striping it in vertical bands of light and colour. There were stripes of purple, violet, green, and blue, made by stains of rock-powder or by new fractures manifesting the transparency of the mass, all diminished or enforced as the play of light decreed. Jagged hills looked down through holes or behind veils of mist. All was fairy-like beyond

the mirror of the calm bay. The floating ice-blocks sometimes stood out white against a purple background and dark sky, sometimes dark against a white curtain of mist; sometimes they glittered behind a vaporous veil. The water was now dark, like lead, now bright as burnished steel. There was continual change, with small visible cause for change. Into this magical region of calm water and pure ice we rowed in search of new scenes, new beauty, new delights.

We passed first through a bed of water so closely covered with broken ice that way had to be made by pushing the fragments asunder. They were of all sizes and colours. Surfaces that had been exposed to the air for a time were white. Others, newly cloven or till recently submerged, were blue or green. There were pink pieces dusted over with sandstone powder from the Crowns. Most of the small fragments were clear like crystal. Sunshine now lay on the still water. The glacier-cliff along which we rowed was mirrored in it. It frequently calved; the resulting waves rattled the ice about us, and the booming thunder echoed among the hills. Farther away we came among countless floating bergs of large size. We passed by devious ways along channels between them, often being so entirely surrounded as to seem on a lake built all about with ice-castles. Some were hollowed into caverns, with walls thin enough to let the light of the low-hanging midnight sun shine through. One of these, coming directly between us and the sun, was resplendent with an opalescent shimmer, finely contrasting with the blueness of its shadowed side. Deep

within the crystalline wall shone a host of sparkling points. The evening was calm, mellow, and clear. A single wave of mist poured over a mountain-pass with a rainbow mantling on its shoulder.

Such experiences filled a couple of days. When we had shot away our last cartridge and eaten our last biscuit, the belated steamer that was to fetch us put in and carried us off just in time. We had ourselves conveyed to Goose Haven in Horn Sound, the southernmost bay in Spitsbergen, and there left for a final week. Never once in that time did the bed of cloud lift far off the sea. We were buffeted by storms and so wearied by inaction that one day we set off inland to attempt a climb. Our camp was only a mile or two from the foot of the famous Mount Hedgehog of the old whalers, the Horn Sunds Tind of the Scandinavians. One of the purposes of our visit to these parts was to climb that mountain. Thus, in despair, Garwood and I set forth, leaving our camp and boat upon the shore. We had to guide ourselves in the dense fog by compass and the trend of the glacier. To our delight, as we rose the cloud-roof became thinner; holes appeared in it; it faded into a veil through which the ghosts of peaks could be discerned. At last our heads emerged above the floor of mist, and there, before us in startling clearness, rose the great wall of our mountain fronting us and the sea. It was a moment of staggering emotion. The hour was near midnight, two days before the sun's first autumnal setting. Its orb, half buried in the fog, flooded the ice-dusted cliff with crimson, so that the rocks

resembled glowing coals, the snow-domes silken cushions. We were rising on to a low, outlying eminence connected with the mountain by a ridge. The climb we had to make was fully revealed before us from bottom to top. There was our peak with a steep buttress coming right toward us; in fact the ridge we stood on was its continuation. To the right of that, as we looked, was a long steep *couloir*, narrowing as it rose. We had to climb this *couloir* to the summit crest and to follow along that to the top.

The surface of the sea of cloud upon which we now began to look down was evenly undulating, the crests of its motionless waves being pink, the troughs filled with blue shadows. This cloud-floor reached out westward to the remote horizon, a most lovely sight. The sunset effect lingered on it and in the sky during the five hours of our ascent.

On approaching the foot of the *couloir* we were mystified by a sound as of sibilant singing that came from all over the mountain. Sometimes we thought it might arise from waterfalls; but that was impossible, for everything was, and for days had been, bound in the bonds of frost. When we were in the *couloir* the explanation was evident. I have called the cliff ice-dusted, for so, from the distance, it appeared; but on closer approach we saw that the ice on the rocks was not dust, but a formation resembling feathers. These feathers were only an inch or two long low down, but near the top they were splendid plumes eighteen inches long or more, and of loveliest forms, like ostrich feathers glittering with diamond dust. The ice-plumes

did not hang like icicles, but stood out straight from the rocks, pointing right into the eye of the gale that had fashioned them. They were built up of fine snow-crystals wherewith the laden wind had bombarded the rocks, thus fashioning the feathers outward horizontally. A year later I saw plenty more examples of the same phenomenon on the storm-beaten mountains of Tierra del Fuego. The storm over and the temperature rising, the feathers were giving way and falling all over the steep face of the mountain. The leverage of their overgrown length detached them, and one brought down many beneath it. Smashing into fragments as they fell, they filled the air with that sibilant, rushing sound. Throughout the ascent we had to run the gauntlet of these missiles and were often hit, and hit hard, but never so severely that it mattered, for they varied in size from a hazel-nut to a hen's egg, and the eggs were rare. Fortunately they kept close to the slope, and seldom flew by higher than our waists.

After crossing two well-bridged *bergschrunds* we attacked the *couloir*, Garwood leading. Frost held the loose stones in place so that none fell, but in warmer weather falling stones must be common in this *couloir*, raking every possible line of ascent. Step-cutting was continuous from the start, at first in snow, presently in hard blue ice. We kept the rocks close on our left, and could sometimes advance a step or two by jamming the foot into the chink between ice and rock. Such relief was rare. About five hundred ice-steps had to be cut. Garwood made them small and far

apart; I enlarged them into shelves for the descent. The view, when we turned round to look at it, was restricted by the jutting walls of the *couloir*. Only the pink and blue cloud-pavement appeared between them, and as the sun swung round from north toward east, the bold blue shadow of our peak flung afar upon it. When we were high up, approaching the final crest, the shadow of the summit became tipped with red. As we mounted yet higher this red tip developed into four concentric rainbows lying on the clouds in the remote distance like a halo round the mountain's head. There also developed two radiantly white bands or roads of brightness, stretching out to the horizon, directly away from us, one on either side of the peak's shadow, each making an angle of about 37° with a line from the eye to the centre of the rainbows. The rest of the cloud-floor was still blue and pink, fading to blue-grey as the sun mounted.

The higher we rose the steeper became the *couloir*, the harder the ice, the grimmer the cold. The distance from the glacier increased. To look down upon it was like looking down a wall. The sky-line did not seem correspondingly to approach, but at last we were plainly nearing a strip of rock, above on our right, which reached down into the ice-slope from the final crest. We cut a long staircase diagonally across to the rocks up a yet steeper ice-slope than any before. They proved to be loose screes encumbered with ice. By them we gained the final ridge, a knife-edge of snow of the giddiest description, with a fall of 3,000 feet on either hand. Here we entered the sunshine,

and the eastward view was revealed. We scarcely regarded it, having our feet to look to as we trod along the very crest of the thread-like snow ridge, stamping it down till it was broad enough to stand on. Here and there overhanging cornices had to be avoided, but only care was required; there was no real difficulty. The summit-rock was a plumb vertical wall perhaps fifteen feet high. It was cloven in half from top to bottom by a crack just wide enough for thin men to squeeze through sideways. A ledge beyond gave easy access to the highest point, a rock on which we laid our hands. It was much too sharp to carry a stone-man, and there were no loose stones wherewith to build one.

The entire panorama was buried beneath the floor of cloud, save toward Barents Land, which was clear, and so was the northern part of Wybe Jans Water, on which the sun shone brightly, and on the long east coast of the mainland stretching in the same direction. Everywhere else were only peaks rising like golden islands out of a silver sea. A multitudinous throng of mountains crowded in the north beyond Ice Sound, the Crowns among them, but we could not identify any particular point. The prominent feature in the foreground was the continuing rock *arête* on which we stood; it trended zigzag northward, rearing itself into jagged and precipitous peaks. A higher point is the summit of a separate peak that stands just south of Horn Sound. This is the true Horn Sunds Tind. The name Mount Hedgehog may be kept for our mountain, which is perhaps forty feet lower than the

*Photo: Prof. Garwood.*

HORN SUNDS TIND, FROM THE TOP OF MOUNT HEDGEHOG, SPITSBERGEN.

other. Ice-feathers profusely decorated the whole ridge and glittered in the sunshine. The effect of this narrow rock-ridge, backed against the bright effulgence of the cloudy sea and its emergent islands, was enhanced for us by the sense of standing high and alone, for, save along the rocky knife-edge, the mountain fell from our feet with such abruptness as to seem practically vertical. It was more like looking from a balloon than from a point on the solid earth.

The height of this mountain is only about 4,500 feet, whereof 3,000 feet intervene between the summit and the foot of the *couloir*. As a climb, therefore, it is about as long as the Aiguille Verte in the Mont Blanc range, and of equal or superior difficulty. The descent offered nothing noteworthy. We were back in camp after an absence of fourteen hours. A couple of days later the steamer looked in and took us on board. That was the end of my Spitsbergen explorations. The wonders and beauties we beheld in this northern archipelago are precious in memory, but they were attained by labours which I should not care to repeat and are by no means adequately indicated in the foregoing pages. Fortunately one forgets the pain and remembers the joy with lasting thankfulness.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE BOLIVIAN ANDES*

TOWARD the middle of August, 1898, I landed at Callao, the port of Lima, with two Valtournanche guides, A. Maquignaz and Louis Pellissier. We had made a leisurely voyage from England, and I had steeped myself in the glory of tropical vegetation in Hayti, Jamaica, and on the Isthmus of Panama *en route*. The contrast between this fertility and the desert coast of South America, south of Ecuador, was thus far the prominent feature of our experiences. At Guayaquil I had religiously sought the mound of Santa Ana, which Whymper daily visited on the look-out for a distant view of Chimborazo, but that famous mountain hid itself from me as from him. It is, in fact, most rarely to be seen from Guayaquil. Old inhabitants told me they had never seen it. Yet on two later visits I saw it from the sea, clear from base to summit. Lima, at the time of year of my visit, was covered by a level roof of cloud, for all the world like the cloud-roofs of Spitsbergen. Its lower surface was a few hundred feet above the roofs, its top at a level of about 5,000 feet. Month after month this blanket lies inert over the country. There is just a

* This journey is described in my book "The Bolivian Andes. A record of Climbing and Exploration in the Cordillera Real in the years 1898 and 1900." (1901.).

clear space of sky visible close to the sea-horizon, through which the sun at its setting peeps for a few moments on the edge of the sudden night. Just then walls, fields, and desert ground are flooded with pink —a brief delight.

The day after landing I made my first mountain ascent in South America, but it was by train, from sea-level to the summit of the Oroya Pass, which is a little higher than Mont Blanc. This is the highest railway in the world. The start was in drizzly and depressing weather. The Peruvians wrapped their heads and mouths in shawls. The train-load was a miserable company. At 5,000 feet we came out into sunshine and began a steeper ascent. Cheerfulness invaded the crowd, and every head turned to the views. The valley narrowed; patches of snow came in sight aloft; knobs of rock protruded through the débris slopes, and the great knees of the hills impended overhead. At 10,000 feet the company became very silent, and one after another was overcome by mountain sickness till few remained immune. Uncanny sounds were heard in every carriage, and heads protruded from the windows. The ascent steepened and we came to zigzags. At the end of each the engine had to be changed from one end of the train to the other. There were corkscrew tunnels and spider-legged bridges over ravines, curves up side-valleys, circumventings of protruding bosses—in fact, every contrivance for getting uphill by a steady grade of 4 in 100. The higher we rose the brighter was the sunshine, the fresher the air, and the steeper the line.

Some halts were caused by rocks fallen on the rails, a frequent and expected event.

Up to about 12,000 feet the hill-sides, where suitable, were covered with terraced fields of ancient Inca construction, elaborate as those of Hunza and altogether similar. Most of them seem now to be abandoned and the canals that irrigated them become unserviceable. Higher up we came to grazing alps and an opener valley. Above 13,500 feet I felt a little dizzy, a tension across the crown of the head, tingling in the soles of the feet as though on velvet—all trifling sensations which lasted for an hour. We passed caravans of llamas carrying loads. Patches of snow lay about. Rocks were rounded by old glaciers, and a snow-peak came in sight. Through a tunnel we emerged on the top into sunshine, and the snowy Cordillera greeted us. The ascent had taken nine hours.

Quitting the train, I seated myself on a waiting hand-car, with a one-armed attendant, and in five minutes we were racing back down the same tunnel, urged only by gravitation. In the darkness the ground seemed to be sliding back beneath us. A speck of light came in view ahead—the tunnel's eye. Like a bomb from a mortar we burst forth into the day. The kilometre posts flew by like a railing! We swung round corners and plunged into and out of the night of tunnels. These when curved seemed to screw about us. A steeper slope came; the landscape shot up on either hand. Some llamas strayed on the track; we missed them by the breadth of a fleece.

We followed the margin of giddy cliffs and shot over unpaved bridges with dizzying depths between the rails. Bang! went a wheel against a stone on the line. The car leapt, but fell back upon the rails. At the end of each zigzag we had to dismount and turn over the points, then to proceed in the opposite direction. It would be easy to overshoot the end. A train full of revolutionaries once did so, and fell a clear 2,000 feet. The handle of the brake was found on the other side of the valley still grasped by a human arm.

The evening shadow climbed the hills. Narrow gorges between tunnel and tunnel were roofed with pink cloud. At the Infernillo a spider-like bridge connects two corkscrew tunnels facing one another from vertical cliffs. We flashed through the sandwich of light. Solid night came on with tropical suddenness. There was no moon, but Jupiter and Venus in conjunction cast a clearly-marked shadow. The Milky Way shone brighter than I could remember. Meteors darted across the sky. Summer lightning lit up the hill-tops. Down and down we went till the slope eased off at Matucana, where we stopped for the night. Next morning we trundled down to Lima along a gentle incline.

The railway journey from Mollendo to Lake Titicaca climbs over a pass (14,666 feet) only about 1,000 feet lower than the Oroya. It is a far less dramatic ascent. The lake lies at 12,516 feet above sea-level. It is one hundred miles long and fourteen times the area of the Lake of Geneva. Sorrowful is

the aspect of its shores except between December and May, after the rainy season. It lies in the long depression between the two parallel Cordilleras, the coast range mainly volcanic, and the snowy range of older rocks, which is the Cordillera Real. When the steamer was well out on the lake the famous mountain Illampu came into sight, eighty miles off beyond the water-horizon. The sun was shining upon it. The side exposed did not offer any easy line of ascent, and the nearer we approached it the worse it looked. We reached the Bolivian port of Chililaya, at the far end of the lake, as the sun was setting, forty-four days after leaving London. Next day we drove in a crazy "tilbury," behind relays of four galloping beasts, forty miles over a very bad road to La Paz, Bolivia's capital. The road lay along the undulating and, at this time of year, barren and brown surface of the high plateau or Puna, and ran parallel to the snowy Cordillera. Its peaks were generally visible over foot-hills to the east. Some were fine in form, but we were on the wrong side of them for good effect. They rose but from 6,000 to 9,000 feet above the plateau, and the lowest half of that was covered by foot-hills. In aspect they are rather second-rate Alps, and there is only one line of them. They should be seen from the east, rising in a great wall of some 16,000 feet out of a base of tropical forest. That is their splendid side. I only once looked down it and once up.

Now the journey to La Paz is made by train from the lake. When one drove, the arrival was dramatic. Illampu had long been left behind; Illimani's head

ON ILLAMPU, BOLIVIA.

was visible, but only the head. The brown Puna undulated around and seemed to be going on for ever. All of a sudden one passed behind a hump, and the ground fell beneath one's feet. There below was a vast basin, miles in length and breadth, with precipitous walls cut into earth-pyramids, and at the bottom of its central portion the city of La Paz, with its roofs like a great pavement. Away off at the end of the valley thus opened the stately Illimani reared his twenty-one thousand and odd feet into the sky from a base not more than five thousand feet above sea-level. We fell victims to his attractions at first sight, and decided to make that our next expedition.

One rare charm the Bolivian mountains possess. They are not mere nameless lumps of rock, but gods which have been named and worshipped by unnumbered generations of men. Chief among them are Illimani and Illampu. The existing Indian population, which calls itself Christian, hides under the surface the old worship. They regarded us as impious men invading the sanctuary of heaven, and many an evil turn they tried to do us. Illimani, though miles away, reigns over La Paz. He fills the end of many parallel streets. One of them is named after him. He is more to the people of La Paz than is Mont Blanc to the Genevans. We set off for him with a moderate caravan of mules. The peak appeared in all its brilliancy as soon as the city had been left behind.

The exit from the great cauldron of La Paz is by the valley of the La Paz river, which has been delved precipitously out of deep alluvial deposit, filling what

once was the basin of the huge lake whereof Titicaca is the shrunken survival. The walls of the valley are often cut into throngs of precipitous earth-pyramids. Nowhere have I seen such numbers of earth-pyramids or such big ones. The valley is barren except where it is irrigated naturally or artificially. Where water meets earth the fertility is great, and there are sweet flower gardens and orchards as well as fields. Lower down the valley is cut through ancient rocks and becomes more rugged. The mule-path was populous with Indians, picturesquely clothed in bright colours, bringing products to the La Paz markets. Now and again we met a country gentleman riding to town. As the valley dropped we came into hotter regions—some that were very hot.

Our descent ended at the beautiful farm of Lurata, on the very hem of Illimani's skirt, where we turned up a zigzag track, and the ascent of the mountain began. It climbed through vineyards and followed along the edge of an ancient canal that waters them. Strong and good are the red wines of Lurata. Great bushes of cane grew beside the water-course. Then came larger trees and gaunt cactuses, finally orchards about houses, and a church. A eucalyptus avenue led to the rather stately manor-house, named Cotaña, where we were hospitably entertained. When the clouds cleared off next day, Illimani's cliffs and snow-crest appeared upstanding in the blue above a whole hill-side of blossoming peach trees. Thus in greater grace but less majesty Fujiyama looks forth above the peach trees of Japan. A pleasant ride beneath over-

arching shrubs in delicious dells or circling round broad corries led us up to the region of the green alp. We slept in the high farm of Caimbaya (11,800 feet), whence on September 5 our final start was made, with four Indians as porters. Working upward round the south-east end of our mountain, we opened a narrow rocky valley by which it seemed we might begin our attack. The form of our mountain is too complicated for description. Suffice it to say that its highest level is an oblong snowfield, over a mile long, resting on a shelf cut off by a precipice. At our end of it were the Pico del Indio and another peak; at the farther end was the highest summit. We had to climb on to this shelf, traverse its whole length, and then mount the final peak. The thing, in fact, was like a gigantic arm-chair or settle. The back was the watershed with some nameless summits. The highest peak and the Pico del Indio rose at the projecting ends of the two arms. We had to climb over a col in the left arm, traverse the length of the seat, reach the col in the other arm, and turn thence up the ridge to the top. The difficulty was to reach the first col.

The ascent of the stony valley took two days. On the third we climbed a rock wall on our right with a glacier ending at the top of it. The porters left us about two-thirds of the way up, throwing down their loads. We had to make many journeys to complete the ascent and pitch camp on the glacier. A sea of cloud filled the hollow of our ascent and roofed over all the La Paz valley. The peaks on its far side, fifteen miles away, and the Puna plateau were clear,

the latter ruddy, sunny, and arid, stretching away to an immense distance, with the faint cones of the volcanoes of the Western Cordillera rising beyond. The cloud-filled valley swept round to the east and, cutting through our range, disappeared round the corner, heading for the Amazon. On this lofty perch I sat in perfect content for the rest of the day, with Illimani at my back and the wide world at my feet.

The ascent to the desired col was to be made by a great zigzag, first up the glacier to the watershed, then back across the snow-slope falling from the arm of the settee to the col near the top of the Pico del Indio. We set forth at 2 A.M. by lantern light over hard-frozen snow. The sky was clear and starlit, but weird flashes like summer lightning broke around us apparently on the surface of the snow. I have never elsewhere seen the like and cannot explain them. Then the old moon rose. Our way was devious, among great crevasses. Two and a half hours from camp, still in full night, we reached the watershed, and looked down an appalling cliff of at least 15,000 feet into the vaguely perceived depths of a wooded valley. That was a wonderful sight in the moonshine. A curious hump of hard ice on the crest of the ridge had to be surmounted, a difficult scramble involving giddy work overhanging the precipice whose grim depths were seen between our insecurely planted feet. Here began the return traverse, across a steep snow-slope—two hours of step-cutting in the now most bitter cold. The sun had risen when the desired saddle beside the Pico del Indio was gained, at a

height of about 20,000 feet. The long snow-shelf was disclosed about 400 feet down, and our peak at the farthest corner of it. The only remaining difficulty was the distance.

The snow was still hard, and we made the best of it while it lasted; but this high mile and a half used up three whole hours of slow continuous plodding, the last half of it uphill. The second saddle was at about 21,000 feet. All felt the great fatigue which soon accompanies work at very high levels, but no sickness or other functional derangement. The final ascent was along an easy snow *arête* which looked down the immense face of the mountain toward La Paz. I walked slowly up it in a curious dream-like condition, and believe myself to have actually slept between the steps. The view was mainly over clouds, save for the foreground of lower summits and *névé* and, farther away, the southern continuation of the Cordillera and some patches of the Puna. Our mountain far outsoared all its neighbours. There was a high exhilaration in the sense of upliftedness, for the cliffs that fell from us were free of fog and the depths could be plumbed by the eye.

The return went well enough till the re-ascent to the Pico del Indio; that was heart-breaking. Slowly and wearily we climbed to its summit and sat down on the rocks, in a chink of which my hand rested on something soft. It was a rotten and swollen piece of Indian woollen cord, and confirmed the tradition that an Indian, once impiously attempting to penetrate the abode of the gods, climbed to this point and was last

seen upon it. He never came back, for the gods turned him into stone. Avoiding our great zigzag, we struck straight down a very steep slope of snow which I think could seldom be descended. It happened to be in faultless condition of tough consistency, but even so had to be treated with great respect. We chanced on the spot where the *bergschrund* could be leapt, then picked a way among the largest crevasses I ever saw, whose bridges were hill-sides. The intricate labyrinth almost benighted us. Clouds gathered overhead; thunder pealed to left and right and echoed among the ice-cliffs; but we passed through and joined our morning tracks before utter darkness settled down. It was black night when our tents were reached.

In descending from Caimbaya to the La Paz valley we circled round under the great cliff of Illimani, and so out from it along a curving ridge. This carried us to a sort of headland a few miles away which looked back across the cirque we had traversed, and up to the peak. A little below us, in the foreground of the view, was a village, and near it a circular dancing floor on a bare field. Illimani looked down upon it with overwhelming majesty. Small wonder that simple people regarded that sky-piercing mass as the throne of a god. And now those sacred heights had been profaned, and by "gringoes." Vengeance might be expected, and it would be the villagers who would suffer. So they were dancing in a ring on the dancing-floor, round and round in continuous circle, to the music of pipe and drum. The little air was repeated over and over again. We heard it for an hour or more as we approached and

receded. It was a plaintive melody and a slow; slow too was the movement of the dancers. I hope the gods were propitiated and preserved their worshippers from the evil foreboded.

Success on Illimani encouraged an immediate assault on Illampu, or rather upon the higher neighbouring summit Ancohuma, which, with Illampu, forms the mountain named Sorata, after the small town at its foot. It was eighty miles to the northward, and we must ride to La Paz and then along the Puna to Lake Titicaca and the town Achacache, where we could turn up toward the Cordillera again. This was the second of the nine times I was destined during that season to traverse the weary plateau, driving a slow mule caravan before us. In early morning and late evening it was bitterly cold, by day blazing hot. The Cordillera, the uninteresting Cordillera as I grew to call it, looked down on us over its foothills on the east. True it possessed one or two fine peaks beside the two giants at the ends. Cacaaca is the best of them, an aspiring pyramid. I seemed always to be passing it without chance of nearer approach. At dawn the range was generally clear, by noon mountainous clouds had risen over the hot eastern valleys, dwarfing the hills; these clouds presently bent forward like a great wave and reached over to and beyond us. Toward the end of the dry season they broke in thunderstorms and sent us wet to bed. It was none too safe for travellers, this populous Puna. Bands of ill-conditioned Indians sometimes wandered about it in the dusk. Such a group once approached me when I was riding alone,

ahead of my men. I showed my weapon, and they passed by, but they murdered a lonely wayfarer behind me. I saw his horrible body carried in across a mule next morning. Some of the village *tambos* had a bad reputation for the disappearance of casual travellers. A *tambo* in which we spent a night was attacked by villagers who expected to find us off our guard and were evidently in league with the innkeeper. Fortunately we had observed, by his queer behaviour, that something was amiss, and were prepared, so no harm resulted.

The whole surface of the Puna seems flat till you travel over it, when it is found to undulate wearisomely. Hills stick up out of the brown alluvium, like islands out of water, and seem placed on purpose to be excellent surveying stations for the Cordillera. But all these hill-tops are sacred places from of old, surmounted by tombs or memorial chapels. The first time I set up my theodolite on one of them a whole village of angry men chased us away with stones and abuse. My survey operations were suspect from the first. Presently our steps were dogged. No sooner did we show ourselves in some valley than warning messengers hurried off in all directions, and we were forced to depart out of the way of the infuriated populace. The survey work had to be done by stealth from points climbed in the night, so that a round of angles could be captured before our position had been noticed. One important point for my purposes could only be occupied under guard of a squad of soldiers fetched specially from La Paz, and even then we did not get away

without plenty of stone-throwing. Little as we intended it, everything we did was obnoxious to the natives. If we mounted into the snows we were impiously invading the home of the gods. If we climbed a low Puna hill we were polluting some sacred shrine or the burial place of some venerated Inca. If we wandered from the main road and passed through a village the populace, at its mildest, turned out to hoot the "gringoes." The Indians do not love the half-breeds. They dislike the people of Spanish descent. They cordially hate all European visitors. They are an unlovely folk, the most detestable I have encountered in any part of the world.

From Achacache, a large, mainly Indian, town on a bay of Lake Titicaca, we turned toward our second great mountain, riding first to the manor-house of Umapusa with a letter of introduction to the bailiff. We depended on him to find us porters and to explain our harmlessness to his Indians. At a higher village, Fraskiya, we finally enlisted six carriers, and with them on foot, rode over a sort of moorland in the direction of our mountain. On topping a rise about three hours higher (17,000 feet) we looked down into a valley with the snout of a glacier at its head. Our camp was pitched near it on a pleasant grassy meadow —an old lake-basin with good grazing for the mules. There were plenty of bushes for fuel, with green-headed humming-birds poised about them. At last I thought the hostile Indians were left far behind, and we could and did sleep in peace after enjoying the blaze of a gorgeous bonfire.

Two of our six Indians having bolted in the night, we carefully shepherded the other four, ourselves also well loaded, to as high a point as possible. They would not go on snow or ice, but the left bank of the glacier was, fortunately, available, and by it we reached a col in a side ridge where our second camp was pitched. That night our base-camp was raided by angry Indians from some other village over whom the bailiff had no influence. It would have gone hardly with us had we been caught. The second camp was close to a great ice-fall. Its *séracs* seemed very insecure; yet I never saw one of them or any *sérac* on these glaciers falling, nor did I see the débris of any. Tropical glaciers have a way of their own. They melt, not into water, but into vapour. None of the considerable glaciers we saw disgorged a torrent. The largest glacier stream we crossed was barely a foot wide. These tottering *séracs* were melting into the air like a lump of sugar in a cup of tea. Hence the remarkable silence: not the faintest trickle of running water. The texture of the ice is likewise peculiar. The *séracs* looked for all the world like lumps of granite. We camped close to them in perfect safety at about 18,000 feet.

Knowing that porters would not be available on the snow, we had brought a rough La Paz-made sledge with us. This we dragged in the bad weather of the following day to a level place on the snowfield, little short of 20,000 feet, where, under shelter of a blue wall of ice, we set up our tent. The march had been very toilsome by reason of the great crevasses, into each of which we had to let down the sledge on

IN CAMP ON ILLAMPU, BOLIVIA.

to a bridge and then to hoist it out on the far side. The bridges were always about ten feet down and the walls at each end vertical. A furious storm raged all night, but the following afternoon was clear enough for a reconnaissance. It was but a temporary interlude. The storm came on again with redoubled fury of wind and heavy snow. Leaving our camp to look after itself, we hurried away down to the base. That storm for us was doubly unlucky. It even snowed all over the Puna, a most exceptional occurrence at this time of year (September 25). But the natives understood all about it. If their farming operations were hindered, it was because we had angered the mountain gods, and the storm was the consequence.

Day after day it continued. I availed myself of the interlude to cross the Cordillera by a low pass and visit one of the rich and warm eastern valleys, the head-waters of the Amazon. Pleasant it was to come into a region of rich fertility after the bare and dreary uplands. It was a fortnight before fine weather returned and we mounted again to our high camp; but the ascent of the mountain had become a forlorn hope. Tent and kit proved to be uninjured when we had dug them out of the snow, but the prospect was of the poorest. New snow burdened every slope. The final peak would probably prove inaccessible. We set forth at the darkest hour of the moonless night to essay it. We were still navigating by lantern light when we reached the gaping *bergschrund*. The cold was horrible. The darkness, the uncertain flicker of our fire-fly candle, the utter silence, the angry

clouds blotching the starry heaven, the vaguely felt rather than seen expanses of snow in the bonds of a frost like the grip of a demon's hand, combined to produce on all of us an immense effect. For a brief moment the thin crescent of the waning moon, newly risen, stood on the edge of the sky before clouds obliterated it. About 4 A.M., still in black night, we stood at the foot of the final slope. The snow was like flour and would not bind. Why it did not slide off in one great avalanche seemed inexplicable. It could only be attacked straight up. We wallowed in it to the waist and suffered agonies of cold. Each step had to be beaten down, and then it gave way under the second man that trod on it.

Dawn broke, pale and thin, and showed the wretchedness of our surroundings. There was nothing for it but to pound on; higher up the condition of the snow might improve. The summit was not so far away. But the higher we rose the softer became the snow. At last it would not bear us. We flogged it down, and then sank into it as much as ever. We flogged again, and again sank. Do what we might we could advance no farther. The top was perhaps three hundred feet away, but we could not reach it. Freezing, disgusted, hungry, we perforce had to turn back. The hateful slope was quickly descended, and then an attempt was made farther to the south. It was all no good. We plodded back to camp, hauled our sledge to the top of the moraine, and so in due course returned to Achacache and the brown and dreary Puna.

The remainder of my time in Bolivia was spent upon the survey of the Cordillera. There was no more climbing weather. All I could do was to snatch at the lower hill-tops and make expeditions up the valleys. I grew to hate the snow-mountains. They played at hide and seek with me and always hid the faces I wanted to sketch. One day as I was sitting at lunch I picked up a casual stone. It occurred to me that, sufficiently magnified, the stone would be a mountain and I might be mapping it. Magnified ten thousand times, it would still be the same shape—and why more interesting? What had size to do with interest? Those Cordillera peaks I was shaping on my map—after all they were only big stones;; why bother about drawing them rather than the bit of road-metal in my hand? Romance had vanished from the whole business. I was sick and tired of mountains and Indians and the survey. Enough had been done. I hurried back to La Paz, where a revolution was brewing, packed up my traps, took the coach to Oruro and washed my hands of the whole mountaineering business.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SOUTH AMERICAN VOLCANOES

NO better corrective for the pessimism of my mood in leaving Bolivia could have been devised than the exciting journey from Oruro to the Pacific at Antofagasta. It is made by a narrow-gauge railway. The distance is about 575 miles and was covered in three days, the train halting for the night and not proceeding at all on Sundays. From Oruro to the sea the whole route passes through an uncompromising desert. At first it is a mere continuation of the Puna : on one hand the barren mountains of the Cordillera, on the other a succession of island hills rising from the plain. The water-line left by the ancient inland sea is clearly marked upon their flanks. The mountains are rich in minerals and dotted over with mining settlements, dreariest of all groups of human habitations. The talk in the train was all of mines. We passed along the shore of Lake Poopo, the other remnant beside Titicaca of the ancient sheet of water, but we never saw it, or at least could be sure that we saw it, because the whole desert plain seemed to be covered with lakes, which, or most of them, were mirages. The views were of the most puzzling character. Everything looked like something else. Tussocks of wire-grass near at hand pretended to be distant woods. Stones or lumps of *yareta* mimicked islands. It was a land

bewitched. After three hours the mirages vanished and the clean desert appeared—the beautiful shining desert with its bright sand, gay or grave according to your humour, purple-pink hills beyond, a clear sky above, and a great sense of space.

The train presently entered a more contracted region of winding cañons, where rocks and earth are brilliantly coloured—red mounds of queerest shapes, red hills horizontally stratified with harder rocks, all sculptured by water into terraces and gullies, but now dry as the Moon. Everything was queer, every corner revealed a surprise. Thus we came suddenly on a wide, dry river-bed, white as snow. The salt deposit lay flat between banks of steeply tilted slates—green, red, blue, purple and all very brilliant under the blazing sunshine—ready-made subjects for cubists. When the desert had widened again and the sun was lowering behind the brown blown dust rising from remote blue hills below a lemon sky I felt as though we had come to the very margin of the world. It was a rude shock to run into the large railway station of Uyuni (12,010 feet), where I halted for a day. The encompassing desert over which I wandered at large is almost incredibly flat and utterly barren, its sandy subsoil caked over with a ruddy substance hard as brick. The skeletons of many mules lined the tracks radiating away. Gaunt bones, sticking up through thin layers of mirage, were like the ribs of wrecked ships. At sunset the desert became black beneath a canopy of high mist, barred with blue. Hills were purple and clear-cut against a green sky. The journey, resumed next

morning, again traversed mirages in which the hills were reflected in their blueness as from rippled water. We crossed the salt white-banked Rio Grande creeping to its death in a saline swamp. The plain was so flat that the line disappeared below the horizon by the curvature of the earth. Not a bird flew over it, not a man stumbled along it, never a house came in view, seldom even the track of a vicuña.

Crossing the Chilean frontier we entered a region of volcanoes. One above the station where we lunched was puffing jets of white steam from its lofty crater. Hills and ground were red, yellow, or white, and dotted over with black cinders. For upward of a hundred miles we passed through a landscape like the Moon's, composed of desert and volcanoes, mostly extinct. The train curved in and out among dry white lakes of salt, streams of cold lava, and volcanoes, some of them perfect in symmetry and grace of outline. Rocks, desert, lava, and hills were brilliantly coloured with utmost garishness—astonishing to look upon in contrast with the white lakes among them. One white lake had a shore of dead black volcanic sand; white dust whirlpools were dancing across it. A hill near by was streaked blood red, chrome-yellow, and other vivid colours. Beyond the watershed at Ascotan (13,010 feet) the railway cuts through a flow of lava lying on the sandy desert and looking as though it had but just come to rest. With this for foreground, volcanoes, large and small, ranged behind, and San Pedro's smoking peak over all, I thought I had never beheld a more weird and inhuman scene. Facing this group was a

THE WEST FACE OF ACONCAGUA, FROM THE SMUGGLERS' PASS.

LIBRARY

many-coloured hill covered, they told me, with magnetic sand, which leaps into the air and flies about in sheets and masses when thunderstorms pass over, to the horror of the Indians. Amid the roar of thunder and the lightning flashes, surrounded by an earthquake-stricken desert all strewn with cinders, this dancing fiend of a hill close at hand, ignorant people may well imagine themselves in the midst of contending demons.

The second night was spent at an irrigated oasis. On the third day we sank steadily toward the ocean, leaving the volcanic region behind. Hill-forms became less pronounced and heights lower till they were little more than magnified sand-dunes. Wind carried the salt dust hither and thither. We rounded a corner and there was the ocean. The desert bent to the shore and dipped beneath the waves.

At Antofagasta we took ship, and in a few days landed at Valparaiso. The desert region was soon forgotten in the luxuriance of a land which is one of the most fertile on this planet. It is the Kashmir of South America. A cousin of Sarah Bernhardt kept the excellent hotel at which I put up. From my bedroom window I saw inland a rocky peak, sharp and clear. It seemed but a few miles away, but as I gazed upon it it appeared to grow and recede. Presently the fact dawned upon me that this was Aconcagua, the highest peak in the two continents of America. Helped by kindly English residents, arrangements were soon made by telegraph and telephone for a rapid expedition to climb it, and within a day or two we were *en route* once more, but no longer as explorers.

Aconcagua does not stand on the watershed of the Andes, but a few miles to the eastward in Argentina. The best way to get at it is up the Horcones Valley, which runs northward from the Baths of Inca and parallel to the watershed. Those baths are in the direct line of what is now the Transandine railway from Valparaiso to Buenos Aires. In 1898 the Andes tunnel and its approaches had not been made. There was a line from Valparaiso to Salto del Soldado, and on the Argentine side from Mendoza to Buenos Aires, but between the two, the pass named Uspallata Cumbre had to be crossed. In summer it could be driven over, but in early December (equivalent to our early June) it was only with difficulty to be passed by mules.

We quitted the train at Salto on December 1 after a few hours' travel through a fair and fertile region. Coaches with four horses abreast drove us some way further till the road was blocked by recent falls of rock from the impending hillside. Mules carried such of us as did not fall off (and we were a bare majority of the town-bred company) to a group of corrugated iron sheds, where we spent the night crowded promiscuously together in rooms paved with beds—six inches only between one and the next. Voices could be plainly heard through the thin partitions, so that when all were a-bed conversation was loudly maintained between the scattered members of a party. Children squalled; their mothers shouted at them and beat them to be quiet. Men began to snore. Mules and arrieros in the corral added to the din. Someone was always stumping about

in the saloon or visiting the kitchen. It was a lively night.

By 3.30 A.M. we had ridden away, a caravan of forty mules and horses, mostly carrying inexperienced riders, for whom this journey was the adventure of a life-time. We went forth in merry mood, following the well-laid zigzags of a good road till that vanished under ten feet and more of hard winter snow. Here trouble began on an unstable slope, where one or two beasts fell, but a level stretch followed. Snow zigzags on a steeper slope gave access to a higher-level valley white as the snow-field of a glacier. Here the snow was not only soft, but presently saturated with water like a Spitsbergen snow-bog. The mules floundered terribly and the caravan was a pitiful sight to watch. Most of the travellers were thrown off, some again and again. Those who dismounted walked into the bog and became wringing wet in the ice-cold water. They cried aloud in their misery. A steeper slope was dry and hard, and my mule easily mounted it to the pass in half an hour, but the caravan, now fallen far behind, found it softened by the sun and took two hours to flounder up.

The fine view from the summit does not include Aconcagua, which is exactly hidden by a nearer peak, but it embraces a richly coloured group of mountains, mainly built of volcanic rocks. Loud were the lamentations with which my travelling companions saluted the pass, for mountain-sickness was added to the troubles of many, and those who had been unprovided with dark glasses were suffering from painful inflammation of the eyes. How the caravan came down I know not. It

was the easiest of descents on foot—a long slope of loose, almost flowing, debris which carried one down a few yards for every step. Between running and sliding I left the 2,000 feet above me in fifteen minutes. This was our first acquaintance with a debris-slope of volcanic rock, of which more anon. Quadrigas were in waiting at the road-level; they carried us swiftly to the Baths of Inca Hotel.

A very curious place is this Baños del Inca. In the middle of a wide and barren desert-valley the river flows in a narrow precipitous gorge furrowed in its flat floor. An imposing natural bridge crosses the gorge, and the road goes over it. A cliff of the gorge, near the bridge, smokes with steam arising from hot mineral waters that emerge from its flank near the top and dribble over the precipice, staining it white, yellow, and bright orange. The hot springs have melted out caverns in the cliff. These caverns, which have natural cup-like floors, are the baths, the only artificial feature being the rough boarded fronts added to them to secure privacy for bathers. It is said that the baths were known to the Incas, and that traces exist of an ancient road between them and remote Lake Titicaca.

All arrangements for our expedition up the Horcones valley, which here opened to our gaze and showed us our mountain at its head, had been made for us by the English proprietor of the baths, Dr. Cotton, so that we were able to get away very early on December 3 with the necessary caravan of mules and men. The ascent of the valley to the foot of Aconcagua was the only dangerous part of the expedition. We re-

crossed the natural bridge and followed a track over the great mounds at the opening of the side-valley; they are the disintegrated remains of immense old moraines. Some way beyond them came the first ford—a dangerous crossing. One mule and man were carried away in the rush of the water, and only just escaped destruction by struggling ashore a yard above a small waterfall. All were ultimately convoyed over by the aid of a long and strong rope.

An easy spell was followed by a further impediment—a steep, smooth, hard slope of old avalanche-snow ending in a direct fall into the boiling torrent. We should naturally have chipped steps for crossing it on foot, but the mules walked calmly over, though the slightest slip must have landed them, without hope of recovery, in the raging waters 200 feet below. I dismounted and tried to walk on the slope, but could not without making steps. The mules just scratched the snow with their iron shoes, and that sufficed to hold them. My heart was in my throat as I rode over after the baggage-train; confidence oozed out of the heels of my boots as I neared the middle. The slope seemed to be steepening, but we advanced steadily. When the desired rocks were but two yards away my mule began to slip, and I thought we were done; but the beast heaved herself forward with a great effort, broke through the edge of the snow with her fore-feet, and scrambled to safety.

There were many more difficulties great and small not worth lingering over. Another but narrower ford had to be crossed. Soon afterward we came to the

level upper reach of the valley, which was fatiguing to traverse but wonderful to behold: the floor golden in tone, the hillsides of purple, red, and bright green rocks, splintered peaks above precipices aloft forming a sky-line like the shattered crest of a ruined castle. The rocks were bleeding with stained waters from the melting snows, and all the torrents flowed red as from a battlefield of giants. At the head of the valley we found an excellent site for our base-camp in a sheltered position among huge fallen rocks. The foot of the immense north-west slope of Aconcagua was only a few paces from the tents.

Next day I sent forth guides and porters well-laden to establish a camp about 2,000 feet up this slope aforesaid. They returned groaning. But for its vast scale there is nothing meaner in mountain architecture than this north-west slope of Aconcagua. Imagine a side of the Great Pyramid hugely magnified. Such is this face of Aconcagua if stripped of debris—a series of little cliffs and shelves; but all of it except the top three or four hundred feet is buried in debris. Here and there a short horizontal cliff emerges, but take it by and large it is a slope of debris from bottom to top. And such debris! They lie tenderly balanced in unstable equilibrium. The slightest touch sets them sliding down. Where they are newly broken from the parent rock they have sharp cutting edges, but in their descent they become subangular, and at the foot of the mountain they emerge rounded like the pebbles of a brook. Up this stuff you have to wade. It is the most fatiguing job imaginable. The foot sinks in,

sometimes almost to the knee. Often after advancing ten steps you are lower than when you started. Some places are a little more stable than others, but nothing indicates them. You have to try to right and left, and get along as best you can. Half the trouble is due to the nature of the volcanic rock, which is excessively brittle. The whole mountain is falling to pieces, and all the pieces are subdividing. Nothing is stable. To carry loads up 2,000 feet on this face is a good day's work. The men returned to camp fairly done. They had found a suitable camp-site, and thither we all mounted the following day, carrying more supplies.

The climb began up a comfortable slope of avalanche-snow, but in half an hour we touched the loose debris. A step or two sufficed. We turned aside into a gully, and followed that on snow and loose stuff to the lowest of the little emergent cliffs or palisades. A scramble of an hour or more led to the flat edge of the step above it, and then came the debris. Above the next palisade our camp was pitched (about 16,000 feet). The scorching sun had given us violent headaches. The tempers of all were sorely tried. I know no other mountain that makes one so furiously angry about anything or nothing. The labour of digging out platforms for the tents was even worse than the toil of the climb. The air was bitterly cold, the sun scorching hot. The tents within were suffocatingly stuffy. The cold and glare outside were intolerable. I was blind to the wonders of the view till the hated sun sank out of sight. Then headaches

departed. The evening glow illumined us and cheerfulness returned.

The way ahead was evident enough—four rows of palisades with debris-slopes between and then our next camp-site. It is useless to dawdle over a description of the next day's climb. It was now and again relieved by short rock scrambles, but otherwise it was one heart-breaking pound, three steps lost by sliding back for every four taken. One point needs mention. We had come to a level where the atmosphere was noticeably thinner and the supply of oxygen markedly diminished. None of us suffered at any time from mountain-sickness; that is a novice's disease; but all suffered from the diminution of strength, which is progressively felt the higher one rises. To meet that disability it is needful to breathe deeply and with great regularity. Even at low levels there is something specially exasperating about backsliding. The art of good climbing consists in raising the body by a continuous series of movements without jerks. Each muscle should be slowly and steadily brought into play and slowly relaxed. If a footstep gives way a sudden call is made on unexpectant muscles, and the rhythmic action of the lungs is interrupted by catchings of the breath. At high levels catchings of the breath are anathema. They involve a halt and three or four deep breaths before the giddiness they have caused is removed. Aconcagua's screes were the cause of frequent pernicious breath-catchings, and this was their worst and most painful effect. Early in the afternoon we had done a day's work, and pitched our second and final camp at

about 18,500 feet. Threatenings of storm and distant thunder passed away, and all was clear by an hour before sunset. We overlooked ranges of mountains stretching far to north and south. Beyond them in the west was the Pacific, like a plain of lead, into which the sun sank. During three days we had the ocean thus in view, and it was always like lead. It never reflected any sunlight even at the moment of sunset. After the sun had gone the horizon remained for a long time illumined by a band of fire, as though a forest were in flames along the margin of the world.

Next morning (December 7) we started at 3.30 A.M. for the final climb. The cold was bitter; the heavens blazed with stars—our home constellations head-over-heels in the north. Following a lantern we stumbled up the debris and the toil began. An hour's work brought some dawn-light, and showed how small a distance we had covered. The final cliff of rock ahead seemed also near. I gave myself three hours to reach it, but in three hours it still kept its distance. It is impossible to exaggerate the labour of that going. It was too much for Pellissier, and he had to turn back. The stuff under foot became looser the higher we climbed. If we yielded to the desire to halt the cold drove us to move on. Clothes, though of thickest fur, and wolf-skin gloves seemed no better protection than so much muslin. Above 21,000 feet with a temperature probably below zero Fahrenheit we felt colder than I ever remember. The fault, of course, lay in our impaired circulation, not merely in the external temperature.

The moment the sun rose behind our mountain it flung its purple shadow like a solid beam to the far horizon of the Pacific, upward of 200 miles away. A fiery radiance filled all the air outside the shadow and gave to the latter an aspect of solidity. Its outer surface was rainbow-tinted. It was a marvellous effect, one of the most wonderful I ever beheld. As the sun ascended the remote point of the shadow withdrew towards us on the water till it reached the Chilean shore, then swiftly came inland over the foot-hills, dipped into the Horcones Valley, climbed the slope up which we had come, and finally reached our feet. Turning round and raising our eyes to the crags aloft, lo! the blinding fires of the Sun God burning upon the crest and bringing the fulness of day!

Maquignaz and I were plodding along alone, far apart. About 8 o'clock I touched the base of the summit cliffs and worked upward round into a gully. It was a bitter disappointment to find the rocks unclimbable and the debris at their foot loose, indeed looser than ever. When they lean against the rock-wall their readiness to slip is superlative. In an hour we had crossed this gully and passed round into a narrower one to the left. We intended to cross the foot of that into a third gully yet farther on, but the debris simply would not carry us and we had to climb straight up, hugging the rocks on our right. At last they became bigger and firmer, and we could halt for some food. A final scramble planted us on the crest of the mountain, and Argentina was at our feet with the cliffs dropping a vertical two miles to the glacier below. To right and

left for over a mile there stretched, like the fine edge of an incurved blade, the sharp snow *arête* which reaches from the slightly lower southern summit almost to the northern. At many points it overhung in big cornices, like frozen waves about to break. Clouds were already covering up the view but did not obliterate it before I had photographed the pampa, which to the eastward looked as flat and limitless as the Pacific to the west.

We put on the rope for the first time and turned along the ridge, step-cutting. It was neither steep nor difficult. It ended in some rocks beyond which the summit rose. We mounted toward it, but stopped a few feet down, for sentimental reasons, the view being now a panorama of cloud. I have often been asked why we did not stand on the highest point. The answer is simple. My old climbing companion, Edward Fitzgerald, had in the previous year completed an elaborately-organised exploration of this district; his party, led by Zurbriggen, had made the first ascent of Aconcagua. They had spent several months in and about the Horcones valley and were popularly supposed to have been trying all the time to climb the peak, though as a matter of fact they did much else. Fitzgerald's book had not been published at the time of my ascent. I thought, and I believe correctly, that it would be harmful for the prestige of that book, just at the point of issue, if I were known to have accomplished in a week what was supposed to have taken Fitzgerald's party several months. I therefore refrained from actually standing on the top. I have regretted my

action since. It did not accomplish all the result intended.

The descent, of course, was, comparatively speaking, a bagatelle, though not exciting. If the stones had seemed loose on the way up, they seemed looser now. We were surrounded at every step by an area of flowing stones some forty yards in diameter and a few feet in depth. Fairly afraid that we might set the whole mountain-side pouring off in a great avalanche, Maquignaz and I separated widely from one another. We often fell. At times we were held fast through the stones flowing round our legs almost to the knee and weighting us down. In two hours and three-quarters from the top we rejoined Pellissier at the 18,500-feet camp. He proved to have been badly frostbitten in both feet. Within an hour we had packed up everything and were off again. The lower camp was gained in forty minutes; there we found a porter asleep. Headaches had been left behind on the summit. Air was getting pleasantly thick. We hurried on to the top of the gully, sent our loads rolling down it, and followed them to the bottom. In another hour and three-quarters all were back with bag and baggage at the base-camp. In about four hours of actual going we had descended the whole 10,000 feet of our climb.

The moment was a lucky one. A gale was already raging on the upper rocks. The spell of fine weather was ended. For the next twelve days the storm continued over all Chile. Quantities of snow fell. Climbing would scarcely have been possible for a month.

Little cared we. Mules came up to us next day, and we rode back to the flesh-pots of the Baths of Inca, though the upper ford was very dangerous, and two of the mules, swept away, were only saved by the lasso. The return ride to Salto was an exciting performance, for we were not now with a public caravan but alone and led by a bold and skilful arriero who knew what the mules could be trusted to do. I followed him blindly. He took me at a trot straight down the steepest and roughest slopes. We descended in thirty-five minutes what had taken us over three hours to ride up. I was surprised to find myself alive and whole at the end.

Of our further experiences in Chile this is not the place to speak. We were again at Valparaiso, then at the capital, Santiago. From Concepcion we finally sailed in a small steamer that would take us, after stopping at Coronel, Lota, and Valdivia, along Smyth Channel to the Straits of Magellan.

# CHAPTER XXII

## FUEGIA

THE southernmost 360 geographical miles of the west coast of South America are flanked by a row of islands between which and the continent runs the inland passage called Smyth Channel. It is one of three such passages in the world, the other two flanking Alaska and Norway respectively. The islands that border Smyth Channel are a sunken range of mountains; the Channel is a sunken valley; hence the propriety of referring to them in this book. It may not be a very good reason, but let it serve.

From Valdivia we had steamed south in dirty weather till by dead reckoning we were off the opening of the Gulf of Peñas. Nothing was visible but the restless sea and pouring rain, dense as a wall. The Messier reach of Smyth Channel is entered from the gulf, and the entrance is defended by many submerged peaks. It was ticklish work feeling our way in, but it was safely accomplished, and we anchored for the night in the calm waters of Hale Cove, enclosed by wooded, Scotch-like hills. Between this point and Magellan Straits the open sea is only once visible from the Channel. All along it is more like a broad river than a sound of the sea. Dense velvet-textured forest drapes the shoulders and forms the skirts of the hills, covering the smallest islands and overhanging the water. The

high-tide level cuts the foliage in a sharp horizontal line so that the branches just touch the surface at the flood, while at the ebb a boat can be rowed beneath the thick arboreal roof. The scenery is fine throughout but rather monotonous: the calm water-way, wooded islands and shores, cliffs above seamed with waterfalls, ice-rounded bare summits reaching up into the roof of heavy clouds, the whole enveloped in a damp and sombre gloom.

By unusual good luck the weather cleared and we had three fine days for our voyage down the Channel—a rare occurrence. The most dangerous point is at the English Narrows, which can only be navigated at slack water. The Channel twists about; sunken rocks lie in wait for the ship that swerves from the true track. Whimsical currents try to draw her aside. Skilful navigation is essential. When the tide makes, the waters boil and race. We landed in the evening of the first day, and again the next, after coming to for an hour to hoist ice on board at a place where small bergs float away from the snout of a sea-ending glacier.

At Puerto Bueno I spent six hours on shore and climbed to a considerable height. Such water-valleys as this are best beheld from a height. Their extent, the form of their mountain banks, their geographical significance are only thus appreciable. When you look down and can see far, a long channel winding away is potent in suggestion of the beyond. The tantalising mystery as to what may be round the corner is a stimulation to the fancy of an explorer. The fascination of a view may consist rather in what is hidden

but suggested than in what is displayed. The glory of an ocean prospect is in the sense of immensity, of stretching away and away beyond imagination's grasp. The larger the area overlooked the more is the mind stirred to conceive the vastness of the unseen. Hence ocean views also are more impressive when beheld from a cliff's brow than from a steamer's deck.

I leapt ashore where a brook emptied itself by a pretty waterfall into the bay. It was overarched with trees, and all the ground about was so thick with the matted growth of things that advance would have been difficult but for the existence of a faintly-marked Indians' track leading inland along the margin of a stream. Ice-smoothed rocks came near the surface everywhere, and the soil was often too thin for trees to grow. But where there were no trees there was a bog, and the path, instead of striking up over it, led along the flat. It dodged in and out and came to an end at the margin of a beautiful lake which the stream drains. The forest trees thronged down upon the edge of the water, so that further progress this way was impossible. Turning up hill, I fought a passage through the trees. Above was an open bog, hard enough to walk on, interspersed in the hollows of smooth sweeping undulations of ice-scratched rock, leading up to one little lake above another, a staircase of tarns, each marking the foot of one of the icefalls of the glacier that formerly covered the whole slope. Up and up I went, leaving the forest far below and gaining an ever more wide extent of view, where islands and channels,

wide stretches of water, and range after range of mountains met the vision on all sides.

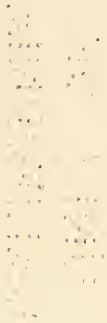
A third day's voyage brought us into Magellan Strait near its outlet to the Pacific. Heavy ocean rollers were pouring in from the west. Only during one clear moment did we have sight of Cape Pillar, the storm-torn promontory fronting the ocean. Here wind blows almost unceasingly, driving before it the waters that are above and beneath. An hour or two of steaming up the Strait brought us again on an even keel. Desolation Island was now on our right hand, and the desolate mainland on our left. The scenery was grander than anywhere in Smyth Channel. The rounded white hill-tops and undulating snowfields of the island, rising behind a paling of boldly pointed rocks, were enveloped in grey cloud-shadows and swept by rain-besoms. Dreary valleys leading to snow-deserts and ice-mantled peaks opened and closed again. Channels darkened by shadows and black reflections stretched away on one side or the other to solitudes haunted only by the last wretched representatives of a doomed race. Thus to the turning about the southern-most point of the continent the scenery remained—steel-grey water in front, purple hill-bases and buttresses beyond, dead white snow above, and a roof of leaden cloud over all. Christmas Eve was giving place to Christmas Day as we rounded Cape Froward. Fifty-five miles farther on anchor was cast off Sandy Point (Punta Arenas), where the guides and I left the ship.

During my stay in Fuegia, with the growing town of Sandy Point for base, a so-called gunboat was placed

at my disposal by the kindness of the Chilean Government. Her name was the *Yanez*, but she carried no gun. It was a few days before she came in. Occasionally on the far horizon, eighty to a hundred miles away, the snowy range of Mount Sarmiento was partially disclosed, but never did I see its highest peak clear of cloud. These mountains stand on the western peninsula of Tierra del Fuego and form part of the series of elevations which farther east is known as the Darwin Range. I had little hope of success in a climbing expedition among these peaks, for they appear to be the focus of flustered and contentious winds and storms of hail and snow that seldom intermit for many hours on end.

To reach Mount Sarmiento we had to steam back to Cape Froward and thence proceed southward down the wide Magdalen Sound which opens out of Magellan Strait. Some thirty miles from the junction it turns at right angles to the west, changes its name to Cockburn Channel and ultimately opens into the Pacific through a maze of islands. At the elbow-point of the bend Mount Sarmiento rises from the water. A canoe came out to us from the darkness of a creek. It was of bark and skins stretched over a wattle framework. The crew were a man, two squaws, and a baby—as ill-looking and unclean specimens of humanity as can be imagined. They wore loose pieces of fur hitched on to them in casual fashion, but most of their bodies were naked, and the falling snow melted upon them. They were fat and greasy of aspect, resembling seals or other blubber-covered cattle. Their fatness served for

LOOKING NORTH-NORTH-EAST, FROM THE NORTH SLOPE OF MOUNT SARMIENTO.



clothing, and they felt no cold. Everything about them and belonging to them was damp except a small fire on a little hearth of earth in the bottom of the boat. An unrecognisable bird was being cooked on it. They exchanged with us for tobacco an otter-skin, which, with others, still keeps me warm in winter. A hump-backed whale was presently approached; it regarded us with indifference and did not move away. Then a school of porpoises gave us frolicsome company. A mile or two away, near the mouth of Keats Sound, a huge whale was leaping like a salmon clear out of the water.

As we approached the base of our peak the weather tended to clear. Just for a moment a bright icy point peeped forth far aloft. Two great glaciers descending the north and west faces of the mountain pushed their wide, rounded fronts into the sea in Darwin's day, but are now shut off from it by a margin of forest-clad moraine, a decoratively contrasting foreground to the white ice. We plied to and again during an hour or more, sounding for an anchorage and reconnoitring the mountain. Its west face was a cliff of rock plastered with ice-feathers like those on Mount Hedgehog in Spitsbergen. An ascent on this side was not to be thought of, but what we could see of the north face was hopeful. After anchoring we landed and fought a way through the dense forest to the north glacier. Though this ground had been the bed of a glacier only seventy years before, it was now not merely covered with full-grown trees and tangled shrubs, but with a thick layer of fallen and rotting

timber hard to scramble over. A small stream guided us through. We found the glacier in further retreat and a belt of recently abandoned bed over which progress would be easy to the foot of our peak. We climbed on to the ice; it was of singular purity. Pools upon it were red with a vigorously growing weed. The sun came out, and for an hour or two the weather was perfect; it was the Fuegian midsummer. Yet Sarmiento still shrouded his head.

We rowed out on to the calm Sound as the hour of sunset approached. A tender pink light, far fainter than the rich radiance of the Alpine glow, lay upon all the surface of the curdled glacier and empurpled the crevasses; it permeated the mist aloft, which lay at the level it had maintained so long. The cruel rocks, incrusted with ice, and the foot of the final precipice with its steep ridges and icy *couloirs* were all that could be seen. The graceful ice-rounded foundation-rocks of this and all the other mountains around slope up to the cliff and the jagged *arêtes* above, and make each peak beautiful with contrasted forms, massive yet suave of outline beneath, splintered and aspiring aloft. In one direction we looked along the channel of our approach; in another, for twenty miles or so, along Cockburn Channel, with a fine range of snowy peaks beside it, prolonging Sarmiento's western ridge. The water was absolutely still, reflecting the dark shore, a few divers alone making ripples on its surface. In this stillness we floated with oars drawn in. The silence of Nature took possession of us; not an avalanche fell upon the hills; not a rock stirred; no

breeze whispered. The faintest hum of falling water haunted the listening ear like the memory of music. I know not how long we may have remained thus inert. Looking once more aloft I found the high mist grown thinner. The pink light crept higher and higher as the cloud dissolved, and yet steeper ice-walls and more precipitous ribs of rock were displayed, till at last some white points appeared upon the summit crest. Even they were not the top, for a cloud lay close above them, hiding we knew not what. Suddenly—so suddenly that all who saw it cried out—far away above this cloud, surprisingly, incredibly high, appeared a point of light like a glowing coal drawn from a furnace. The fiery glow crept down and down as though driving the mist away, till there stood before us as it were a mighty pillar of fire with a wreath of mist round its base, and downward a wonderful pink wall and cataract of ice to the black forest and reflecting water. We had seen the final peak now—a tower of ice-incrusted rock, utterly inaccessible from the western side.

A little while later the fair colour had faded away. Mists had re-gathered, and night was coming on apace. We rowed away for the steamer, but had not gone very far before a faint silver point appeared above the mist where the glowing tower had stood. The cloud-curtain rolled slowly down again, and the summit crest was revealed, cold and pure. Then the whole south-west ridge appeared, and finally the entire mountain, like a pale ghost illumined by some unearthly light. It was a weird and almost terrifying vision. A moment later clouds rolled together, and solid night came on.

Wind sprang up; we hastened to the steamer for warmth, food, and sleep. The summit we had seen was doubtless one of the terminal teeth whereof there are said to be two, approximately equal in height, standing at opposite ends of a ridge. Both are visible from Sandy Point, but I never saw the other. Satisfied that we had chosen the only practicable side of the mountain for attack, and hopeful of finding the culminating point more easy of access than it had appeared from north and west, hopeful too that the weather was settling for one of the brief fine intervals that alone can be expected in this storm-beaten region, I turned in for a few hours' rest.

At 12.15 next morning (December 31) we again left the ship—Maquignaz, two sailors, and I. We carried rifles, a few light provisions, and the ordinary implements of mountaineering. As we pushed off from the steamer an Indian canoe glided away silently, and disappeared in the shadow of the shore. We afterward found that it was one of several that were sneaking about in the neighbourhood, a dangerous locality, as Captain Slocum had occasion to discover. Fifteen minutes' rowing over calm water reflecting the grey sky brought us where we had re-embarked the day before and entered the belt of wood. Its dusky recesses were hardly illuminated by the faint mingling of watery moonlight and dawn. We lost our way hopelessly, and had a desperate struggle to get through. The moraine area behind was exasperating to traverse in the darkness. We kept falling into puddles, tripping over stones and shrubs, and bruising ourselves

against obstacles. As the pink light, heralding sunrise, touched the high mists, and for a moment dyed a patch of thin cloud through which the silver moon was shining, we halted beside the glacier. The best that can be said of the weather is that it was not immediately threatening; but the air was unpromisingly warm, and among the plentiful clouds were several of umbrella shape, capping peaks, an almost unfailing sign of wind and bad weather to come. Advancing to the farthest end of the moraine flat, we came where glacier and hillside met. We should have done better to work along the edge of the glacier itself, but we took to the hillside. This involved a tough scramble up an ice-polished wall whose every cranny was filled with moss and every larger crack occupied by a tree. The scrambling had to be done from tree to tree, for the moss was too soft to hold and the rocks too smooth to give footing. After traversing a further belt of forest we came out on a slope of grassy alp, interspersed with patches of bog in the hollows. Mounting this for some distance, we halted at an altitude of 1,400 feet in full daylight.

Our steamer was just visible over the forest belt. When I first saw it I thought it was a small floating log, so near and minute did it seem. We looked along Cockburn and Magdalen Channels, and over the wooded and snowy hill-chaos of Clarence Island between them. The air was so clear in the gloom of the morning that the remotest mountains visible seemed like molehills close at hand. The landscape bore a striking resemblance to views I recalled among the

Lofoten Islands. Up the fjords and on the promontories of Clarence Island, and on the little wooded islands that flank it, thin columns of smoke ascended into the calm air and drifted away to immense distances before dispersing. They were the cooking fires of scattered families of Canoe Indians. Where we saw a dozen or two, they might have been counted by hundreds in ancient days. Such smoke columns were also used by the natives as far north as Northern Patagonia for signalling to one another; some of these we now beheld may have been signals. They made a striking feature in the landscape. Such signal fires gave the name to Tierra del Fuego.

During a brief interval we had one more glimpse of Sarmiento's peak above the rocks of the cirque. Clouds were eddying about it; it was evidently the focus of a gale. We saw enough to learn that the northern slopes reach not merely to the foot of the rock tower, but lean up against it to at least half its height. This was a great encouragement; obviously we had chosen the right way. We plodded upward.

The grass soon gave way to slopes of firm snow and occasional stone-debris. A low cliff of slate arising on our left hand shut out the northward view. Striking the crest of the ridge at a gap above these cliffs, we thought ourselves far enough from possible Indian intrusion to leave the rifles hidden beneath an overhanging rock. Henceforward we scrambled along a broken ridge of rocks, in places surmounted by a narrow and decaying wall, almost like one built by

human hands. Beyond that came a snow-ridge and then a peak, whereon we halted.

The position was a commanding one. I photographed the panorama, for it seemed that the clear weather could not last much longer. As a matter of fact, this was the last point from which we saw anything. Our altitude was about 4,000 feet. We were cut off from Sarmiento by a wide snow-saddle, about 100 feet below us, communicating on one side with the great west glacier and on the other with the north glacier. It would be a good situation for a camp. The ridge we stood on is part of the north-west subsidiary range. We enfiladed its peaks, and were surprised at the boldness of their forms. Looking upward, we beheld the northern snow-slope, broken into *névé séracs*, disappearing in cloud. But the most striking view was to north and east, where we overlooked the great reservoir which pours out glacier-tongues in three directions—east, north, and west. Beyond this silent, pallid expanse came the dark ranges, crowned with snow, that bordered the deep trench of Gabriel Channel. North, far away, was Cape Froward, at the end of Magdalen Sound. Then came the intricate chaos of peaks and ranges filling Clarence Island. Still farther around we looked down Cockburn Channel and along the snowy ranges south of it. It was a wonderful view, not merely for its extent, but for the indescribable solemnity of its colouring. There was no sheen upon the water, no glitter on the snow. It was white with the pallor of death, and framed within forest belts of sable blackness.

A storm, gathering in the north, soon blotted out the southern extremity of the continent. There was evidently no time for delay; we had need to descend on to the saddle. Beyond it the way led up a great broken snow-field of ever-increasing slope, where the *séracs* were large and crevasses yawned in all directions. It was a difficult glacier, gradually narrowing with the ascent as the side ridges came together. The last slope was less broken. At the very top of it were to come the rocks of the final pyramid; but we never touched them, or even saw them, for the storm battalions from the north swept down upon us with fury, swallowing up the view before it ever became a panorama or our eyes could behold what I so longed to see—the great range, stretching away behind Mount Sarmiento to Mount Darwin, which looks down on Beagle Channel. The darkness in the north, before it descended upon us, was truly appalling. It seemed not merely to cover, but to devour the wintry world. The heavens appeared to be falling in solid masses, so dense were the skirts of snow and hail that the advancing cloud-phalanx trailed beneath it. Black islands, leaden waters, pallid snows, and splintered peaks disappeared in a night of tempest, which enveloped us also almost before we had realised that it was at hand. A sudden wind shrieked and whirled around us; hail was flung into our faces, and all the elements raged together. The ice-plastered rocks were accounted for; we came to resemble them ourselves in a few moments. All landmarks vanished; the snow beneath was no longer distinguishable from the snow-filled air. To advance was impossible.

The one thing to be done, and done at once, was to secure our retreat. We had no time to take a barometer reading, but our altitude may have been around 5,000 feet. With what speed we hurried down may be imagined. Not till we gained the lower glacier did snow give place to rain, which soaked us to the skin and overflowed out of our boots. We floundered in swamps and tumbled through brushwood; then striking out a new route, climbed on to the glacier and followed it right down to its foot, where the rapidity of its present retreat became apparent. Instead of ending in a bulging front, it fades away beneath a covering of moraine, in a series of icy mounds, some of them quite high and almost isolated from the snout, last fragments of its greater extension. Thus, to our surprise, we found a broad opening, perhaps a hundred yards wide, once the bed of the glacier torrent, which led right through the forest belt to the shore. Avoiding all trouble with the wood, we came out upon the beach and fired our guns to attract the attention of the steamer.

Our time was up. The *Yanez* was due elsewhere. We returned to Sandy Point. I went to bed with an armful of newspapers. An explosion in the street and a great hullabaloo startled me. Expecting some tragedy, I rushed to the window, but it was only the year 1898 that was dead and my mountaineering career ended.

Though I climbed no more in the meantime, it was not till August 19, 1901, that I took formal leave of snow-mountains by going again to the summit of the

Zermatt Breithorn, which (as the reader may remind himself by looking back to Chapter III) I had climbed on September 9, 1872. Then I was a schoolboy. Now I was accompanied by my daughter. It was to be her first mountain-climb, as it had been mine. She was, within the compass of a Lent, the same age that I had been. We slept at the Théodule Hut, and the weather was propitious, but I found the final slope a much more toilsome affair than twenty-nine years before. The view embraced all my hoary-headed friends. Scarcely a peak of any importance was in sight on whose summit I had not stood. I saluted them for the last time, but not regretfully. They had given me health, joy, beauty, friends, and rich memories. Those I was not going to leave behind. They are still mine and infinitely precious.

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